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CHRISTIAN COURIER

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But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

(Luke 2:10-12, NIV)

Christmas Issue Highlights:

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Christmas Greetings

Christian Courier's staff and contributors wish you a blessed Christmas

Christian Courier's *staff, pictured within the creche scene next to City Hall, St. Catharines. From left, Alan Doerksen, Ineke Medcalf, Rose der Nederlanden, Harry der Nederlanden. We would also like to thank Kim Yungblut, who works tirelessly with our mailings and wasn't available for this photo.*

Christian Courier

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Dear Readers,

Christian Courier's staff and contributors join columnist John Wood to wish you God's richest blessings during this Christmas season.

"The Lutheran Theologian Joseph Sittler once said, 'I've never been able to entertain a God-idea which was not integrally related to the fact of chipmunks, squirrels, hippopotamuses, galaxies, and light years.' The whole creation, it seems, is wiggling in eager anticipation, like children on Christmas eve, waiting to see what we are going to do. And I am eagerly waiting too! God bless you richly this Christmas season." **John Wood**

Christmas Prayer

PIET KLAASSE ILLUSTRATION

Dear Lord, as You came down to earth,
Transformed yourself through human birth,
and left your heavenly home behind
that humbly, You could serve mankind.
Your royal robes you have laid down—
to bear the cross and thorny crown,
You came to rescue souls from hell—
great Prince of Peace, Emmanuel.
Prepare, oh Lord, my heart today
and enter in, as King, to stay.
Come, bend my stubborn, self-made will
and warm my heart — remove the chill.
Let me whole-heartedly rejoice
in thankfulness to raise my voice
For such a gift of saving grace
deserves my soul's undying praise.

From *"Glimpses of His Glory"* by Louise Smit

Attention *Christian Courier* readers:

Please note that our next issue will be published Jan. 6, rather than Dec. 30, to allow our staff to enjoy a Christmas vacation. A blessed Christmas to you all. See you in the New Year!

Christmas

It came upon a midnight clear....

Harry der Nederlanden

We are fortunate this year to receive some excellent Christmas stories to enrich our Christmas celebrations and reflections; they are quite different but also similar. One is by a retired RCMP officer, Ralph De Groot, which we titled, "Night Patrol, Christmas Eve" and simply recounts a lonely patrol by a fledgling Mountie many years ago.

Another is from a tireless school teacher, Ron De Boer, titled simply, "PIER 21." Pier 21 is the name of the building that received the thousands upon thousands of immigrants disgorged at Halifax by huge ships during the '50s . Sonya Vanderveen's story, "Quitting Times," is a family scene between parents and a child set in the Christmas season, and Beatrice Vandervelde's "Lasting Light" about a friendship between two young girls that also unfolds into the Christmas season.

Artfully recalled memory

I can't resist comparing the stories by De Groot and De Boer. They are quite different but there are also many similarities. One story is autobiographical, rooted in memories of a lonely Christmas many years ago. Yet, it is more than a simple recital of fact; it is artfully recalled memory, thick with meaning and Presence. The other, although set in a real, historical happening, is a fiction, a traditional story of a visitation on Christmas eve, a Christmas miracle that is a parallel to the once-for-all miracle of the Word become flesh.

One is about birth; the other about death. Both evoke loneliness, estrangement, darkness; and then the darkness is penetrated; it glows like the shadows in Rembrandt's paintings, and we look through it as through dark glass to see God molding life out of death.

In both, as in the biblical Christmas story, officialdom is present: in "Pier 21," it's the immigration officer; in "Night Patrol," it is the police officer. Officials make for sober, skeptical witnesses. In the Gospels, they often don't see what's right in front of their noses; it's the unreliable shepherds who are called on to testify to the great miracle in Bethlehem. But officials are nevertheless called to testify, even in spite of themselves. Think of Herod giving directions to the wise men.

Deeply felt relationships

The stories by Vanderveen and Vandervelde are both fictions that end up focusing on things we all put out during the Christmas season – trees, candles, lights. Although they focus on these things – decorations – the stories are really, of course, about intimate human relationships, about love and friendship. By way of the traditional symbols, they seek to point to the profound significance of the coming of the light of the world for the ordinary but most deeply felt relationships of our daily lives.

They both sketch small domestic scenes, but by fastening on that one little symbol of light, they open up into a much larger space. Vandervelde's story becomes – on the level of a child's friendship – a symbol of the entire mission enterprise: to fill the peoples of the world with the wonder Christians experience at Christmas when they see the lights blaze up in the darkness proclaiming 'No more alone! God with us!'

Similarly, Vanderveen's story unfolds into a symbol of believers handing on light from one generation to another, a light that signals there is hope and healing ahead for those blanketed by the darkness of despair.

The note of strangeness or the threat of estrangement runs through all the stories. In De Boer it is immigrants coming to a strange new land; they are being processed by officials far from family and friends on a night that makes the longing for those relationships even more intense. The lonely young officer on patrol in De Groot's story also feels that loneliness as he drives his rounds far from home in Nova Scotia.

Nothing brings home our separateness as intensely as when a mother or father sees a child suffer and yet is unable to make it better. That's the struggle in Vanderveen's story: the fear that even when I am so near the darkness may still swallow my child. In Vandervelde's story, the strangeness is that between friends of two different cultures. To one of them the rituals of Christmas seem strange, even frightening. As the story unfolds, two friends experience Christmas in a richer way by seeing it through one another's eyes.

Bridging the distance

Christian artists generation after generation, whether through storytelling or painting or music, have struggled to bridge the estrangement of distance between that long-ago event and their own time. I've included here (on this page) a picture painted by William Kurelek, an immigrant to Canada, who painted a whole series of pictures that place the incarnation, the birth of Jesus, here in Canada among us. Like artists from pretty well every century, he paints anachronistically, that is, he violates temporal order. Joseph, Mary and baby Jesus inhabited a different time and a different place than ours. Yet, I've been browsing through art books, and the painters who struggle to depict the family of Jesus in costumes and settings true to Palestine as it was some 2000 years ago are few and far between. In fact, most of those that do are inferior works of art.

Across the River from the Capital: *artwork by William Kurelek.*

Christmas in simplest terms is celebrating Jesus' birthday; like other birthday parties, it is an act of remembrance conjoined with delight. We remember the day someone we love came into the world, and we say, "We're glad you're here. The world is a happier place because of it." After people die, however, we usually don't keep remembering their birthday; it gets displaced by the date of death. But we don't celebrate that day. We prefer to forget it.

We keep celebrating Jesus' birth, however, even while we keep remembering his death. In fact, Jesus himself gave us a special way to celebrate his death much more often than once a year – the Lord's Supper. Christmas, on the other hand, is not biblically instituted; it's a celebration the church made up on its own initiative. And for that reason during the Reformation some Puritans wanted to do away with it. It's still here, however; and we children of the Reformation celebrate it just as eagerly as anyone else.

And it would be grinchy to say that it's such a big holiday only because of the consumer side of it. It is, however, disquieting to think that our Western economy (and therefore of the entire globe) depends upon our excessive Christmas spending. I doubt that Jesus would like to see our well-being linked to his birth in this way.

Before our prodigal celebrations

But long before our prodigal celebrations began, musicians and painters and sculptors and storytellers sought to make present to our eyes and imaginations this incredible incursion of our Lord God into our time, into our flesh, into our world.

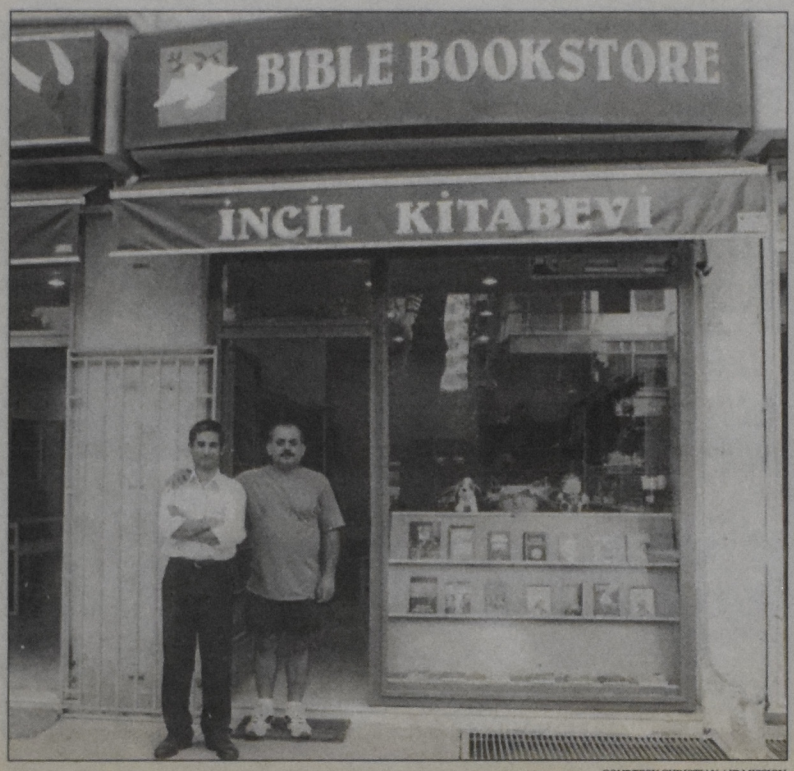
For that is the reason we keep celebrating, of course: he was born our Lord, and in spite of his death – no, because of his death – he is still our living Lord, who not only rules victorious at the right hand of God but who has established his Kingdom here on earth among us and who by his Spirit empowers us day by day to serve as his ambassadors and as heralds of his coming again in glory to unite heaven and earth and to establish once and for all his rule of justice and peace, love and faithfulness.

Nativity is hard to depict

The nativity is so hard to depict because to do so properly we need to paint it in multiple dimensions: not just a single event that transpired once long ago, but an event that was itself the fulfilment of mankind's longings and expectations since the Fall, an event that is the birth and bearer of our very being in the present, an event that lifts the darkness from the horizon before us and lights it with the promise of a new heaven and a new earth in which he will be all in all. Hallelujah! Come, Lord Jesus!

News

Turkish pastor starts up 'legal' church and Bible bookstore



COURTESY CHRISTIAN AID MISSION

It took Kaya Esen (above right) 18 years of hard work to start this Bible bookstore in Adana, Turkey.

Alan Doerksen

FORT ERIE, Ont. – Freedom of religion in Turkey has a very different meaning than it does in Canada. For Kaya Esen, it has meant working for 18 years to get permission to open a Bible store. Esen has also started a legal church — a rarity in a country which is predominantly Muslim.

Esen is pastor of Adana Baptist Church, in the city of Adana, in south central Turkey. In November, he traveled to Canada as a guest of Christian Aid Mission, to speak to Canadians about his work in Turkey.

'Freedom of religion'

Esen explains why it has been so hard to start up a "legal" church and Bible store. "Turkey is an Islamic state.... Even though Turkey is a secular country, still people think like Muslims," he says. Turkey's government allows freedom of religion. This means that Christians "can get together, read the Bible, speak about the Bible, as long as you are in the fellowship." However, he notes, "You cannot [place] the name of your church in front of the building. You're not allowed to preach the gospel. You can teach. Legalized church means always a police officer... will be sitting there and listening carefully to what you are saying. You really don't have freedom of religion. You can't say what you want to say. You will be limited."

To start a church in Turkey, one needs to get written permission from the government, and legal documents. In contrast, "Muslims can pray, read, distribute the Koran, build a mosque wherever they want to," asserts Esen. "But if you want to establish a church... it has to be 500 metres from a school, 500 metres away from a mosque, 500 metres away from Islamic community. Where in the world will you find such a place in the land of Turkey?" he asks. "There is a mosque on every corner."

Because of these rules, "you can't establish a church within the city limits," explains Esen. But even in the countryside, it is difficult. "Once you go there, the military is involved, and you get no permission whatsoever."

Once a congregation finally gets permission to open a church, "you can rent a store, you can build a place, but it will not look like a church. You cannot advertise the church – yet you have freedom of religion!" he says with a smile.

Even a legalized church has "no protection at all," explains Esen. "Anytime, anybody can walk there and just blow everything away." But it also means that Muslims can come to hear the Gospel.

To get permission to open Adana Baptist Church, Esen had to "go to the governor, the state department, the police department, through all this painful process. Finally, they tell you, 'Okay, you find a place where your church is going to meet, and we will come and decide.'" Once a location is found – no easy task – pastors such as Esen have to tell the authorities when the church's services will begin and end. "They give you only two hours," he says. He also has to report how many people will come to the church. If he says 30 people will come, and 35 come out, he will be asked, "What's happened? You told us 30 people, now you have 35."

In Turkey, "The main body of Christ meets in cell groups... in underground church services," explains Esen.

18-year process

To start up a Bible store in Adana, Esen has also faced a laborious task which took 18 years, until the store was opened August 1, 2001. Esen sees the store as being a special outreach to Turks, most of whom have never seen a Bible even once.

When Esen became a Christian, he learned about the work of foreign missionaries in Turkey. "They were always followed by the police," he explains. "The police made it almost impossible for foreigners to come and establish a church."

After his conversion, Esen "wanted something radical, something different to reach out to Muslims, because most of the missionaries do not understand where

See **TURKISH** *p. 5...*

Talisman leaves Sudan, but moral stain remains

Alan Doerksen

MISSISSAUGA, Ont. – Many social justice agencies are relieved that Talisman Energy Inc. has decided to move out of Sudan, after four years of controversial involvement there. But Voice of the Martyrs (VOM) believes the reputation of Canada has been tarnished by Talisman's work in Sudan, and is planning to present an apology in January to Christian leaders in southern Sudan.

The Calgary-based oil company announced October 30 that it has sold its share of a Sudanese oil project for $1.2 billion. "It was time to turn the page," Talisman CEO Jim Buckee told a news conference, as reported by the *Globe and Mail*. "We felt the controversy detracted... from the strength of our other assets. Every newspaper mention of Talisman was qualified under 'involved in Sudan.' We hope to move on from that instant association."

"Talisman's shares have continued to be discounted based on perceived political risk in-country and in North America to a degree that was unacceptable.... Shareholders have told me they were tired of continually having to monitor and analyze events relating to Sudan," Buckee told the conference.

Heavily criticized

Talisman has been heavily criticized by human-rights and church groups such as VOM which reported how revenues from the company's projects in the country were helping finance the efforts of Islamist government of Sudan in the 18-year civil war and human rights abuses against the people of south Sudan (many of whom are Christians).

Responding to the news of Talisman's sale, Glenn Penner, VOM's communication director, said, "We are, of course, gratified to see Talisman leave the Sudan. I have personally experienced the shame of having to answer for Canada's involvement in the country whenever I have been to Sudan over the last four years. The people of Sudan never saw this investment as simply that of one Canadian company. They saw it as a statement of our country's callous indifference and desire to feed off of their corpses. The last four years have left a bloody stain on Canada's reputation in the region that will not be washed away for some time."

Penner tells CC that VOM has been

COURTESY GLENN PENNER

VOM's Glenn Penner.

pushing Talisman to leave Sudan for the past four years. Now, the Sudanese government "can't use Canada as a moral cloak anymore," he asserts.

According to Penner, who has visited Sudan several times, the people of south Sudan would refer to Talisman as "that Canadian oil company.... There was no question: they knew Talisman was a Canadian company."

Noise from outside

Penner believes Talisman's shareholders had some effect on the company's decision to leave Sudan. But he points out there was "very little effective lobbying by shareholders" against the Sudanese project. "People who were making a noise from outside" – such as VOM, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, and Kairos (an ecumenical group of mainline denominations) – "did some very effective work" on this issue, he says.

But Penner notes that VOM had to be careful of what it said, because there was a political side to this, and VOM does not want to be too political.

According to VOM, investigations by Amnesty International, Christian Aid and other agencies "have found conclusively that Talisman was deeply complicit in human rights abuses and violations of international law in Sudan. According to these reports, indigenous peoples living on the oil exploration sites... including Talisman's, [were] being violently displaced in the tens of thousands.... Airstrips on Talisman's 'concessions' were used by the Sudanese military to launch air attacks on civilian settlements in the oil concession areas."

See **VOM PREPARES** *p. 5...*

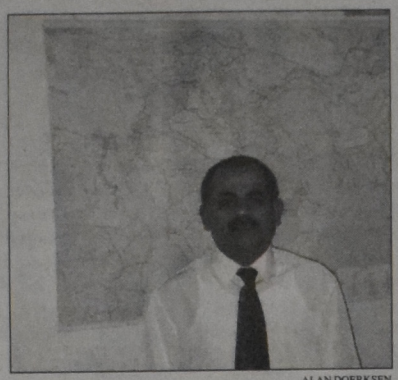
News

Turkish Christian does 'something radical'

... continued from page 4

Muslims come from." But Esen grew up in a Muslim family. "Islam is a religion only understood if you read the teachings of Mohammed in the Koran.... There is a conflict between Christians and Islam... because [after] every Muslim is born, they begin to hear that the gospel of Christ is corrupted.... They say Jesus came to prepare all people to believe in Mohammed. All the children, from a very young age, begin to hear this from parents, from schoolbooks."

Esen's "radical" approach to mission work involved starting a Bible store. "Instead of going out witnessing door to door, I wanted to do something much easier: a Bible bookstore, where everybody can come."



ALAN DOERKSEN

Kaya Esen stands near a map of Turkey, at the Christian Aid office in Fort Erie, Ont.

Sufferings beyond imagining

When Esen first asked for government permission to open such a store, "the government told me I can open a bookstore, I can sell a few Bibles. But I cannot put up a sign in front of the bookstore and say, 'This is a Bible bookstore.' It took me 18 years to get that permission – 18 years of working day and night. I went through more sufferings beyond imagining than any North Americans. I was in jail for this, I was attacked several times.

"Finally, my dream came true: I got permission. We rented a place in the most popular place in Adana: right on the main street. We rented the bookstore right in front of the mayor's house." Far from secret, the store now has a big sign saying "Bible bookstore" in Turkish and English.

Esen met other opposition along the way. "Everybody told me, 'Don't open it. People are going to bomb it,'" he recalls. "But on Day One, 50 people visited." People came out of curiosity, because, "99.9 per cent of all the population of Turkey has never seen the Bible, even once in their lifetime," asserts Esen.

Bibles and New Testaments are expensive in Turkey. "The average income of a family is $150 a month, and how can a family come and pay $5 to $6 to get a New Testament? That's why Christian people contribute for printing Bibles and the Bible bookstore provides and gives [them] for an affordable price." Turkish Christians alone cannot pay for the cost of printing the Bible in their language, he notes.

"According to the agreement we have with the law, we have to sell Bibles, but we can sell at any price we want to," says Esen. Sometimes, the store has a sign saying, "All Bibles and New Testaments: 99 per cent off the price," says Esen. "We have a special price almost 11 months of the year! So, anyone can walk in with pennies and dimes and get a New Testament. We have to issue a receipt, even though they pay a penny, so we don't break the law."

A revolution and revival

Since the store opened just more than a year ago, it has sold 28,000 New Testaments, reports Esen. "That is a revolution in an Islamic country. It is a revival."

Each day, Esen's store is open between 6 a.m. and 9 p.m. "One 'sister' shows what the Bible is and the prices; one brother works in full-time ministry to counsel, to answer the questions of the people; and there is another brother who works as a security guard in front of the bookstore – so people won't leave anything in the bookstore to blow us away."

Since the store opened, people have broken into it and stolen the computer and information records. Besides that, says Esen, "we receive many phone calls, and they threaten us. We receive many death threats." But Esen asserts, "We believe the Lord God is going to protect us."

Some people are afraid to take a New Testament home, so "they come to the Bible bookstore before they go to work. They read anything they want to. Or they come after work."

Esen and his co-workers do follow-up discipleship work with customers. "Each time people come, we get their names and addresses, and we have a visitation team that goes and visits those people. They disciple them and help them to understand what they are reading in the New Testament. When they become Christians, we encourage them to come to join our church service."

The store also has a web site (**www.incilkitabevi.com**), from which people can order Bibles and books.

Asked about the newly elected government of Turkey – an Islam-based party – Esen says they will make life more difficult for Turkish Christians. The new government is "Islamic-minded.... They are trying to bring *sharia*. No matter how much they say they want to be secular, you never believe that. The only hope we have to prevent [*sharia*] is our military. We have a secular and democratic military."

The previous Prime Minister "really did an excellent job to bring democracy, freedom of religion," observes Esen. But he thinks that government was defeated because it wanted to change laws to allow Turkey to enter Europe's Common Market. "I think [Turks] are not ready for that, and they voted them out."

Christian Aid has been partnering with Esen for the past 18 years, he reports. He encourages Christians concerned about the church in Turkey to "print more New Testaments and supply more Bibles to the bookstore so we can give them to the Muslim people. They can contribute financial support to Christian Aid, designated for the Bible bookstore ministry."

VOM prepares apology to Sudan

... continued from p. 4

Talisman was "absolutely" co-operating with the Sudanese government and "became a mouthpiece" for it, asserts Penner. He points out that the Presbyterian Church of Sudan has launched a class action lawsuit in the U.S. against Talisman. "They're charging that Talisman was willingly involved" with the displacement of people, he says.

'What humanitarian work?'

Although Talisman claims to have done some humanitarian projects in Sudan, Penner retorts, "What humanitarian work? If it's there, it's so small.... They did it for publicity purposes. It hardly impacted anybody."

But Talisman has refused to admit any oil-related displacement of people, according to VOM.

VOM is also critical of the many Canadians who have invested in Talisman. "We were all investing in Talisman through the Canada Pension Plan," asserts Penner. CPP holds about $53 million worth of Talisman shares. Besides that, whole denominations were invested in the company. "They were padding their own futures at the expense of our brothers." But some denominations divested their holdings in Talisman, including the Anglican Church, United Church of Canada, and the Baptist Union of Western Canada.

VOM's apology

VOM has prepared an apology to the people of south Sudan, which is available on the agency's web site for concerned people to sign (see:**www.persecution. net/sudan.htm)**. The apology states: "We, the people of Canada, offer our sincere and heartfelt apologies to the people of south Sudan for the harm that our country has helped afflict upon you in recent years. Through the actions of one of our largest independent oil companies, Talisman Energy, and the policies of our elected federal government, we have helped provide the means and moral cloak that have allowed your government to terrorize all aspects of your society and threaten your very existence. By our greed, we have secured our own future at the expense of yours by investing in Talisman through our pension plans. By our indifference, we have permitted our federal government to hide behind the policy of 'constructive engagement' which has resulted in an unacceptable maintenance of the status quo. We apologize for these actions and pledge to seek to remedy our past by doing more to alleviate your suffering and promote initiatives that would result in the establishment of a just and sustainable peace in your country."

Penner is going to Sudan in January to present this apology to the New Sudan Council of Churches. "We never intended this campaign to be a backhanded way to pressure Talisman," he explains. "It is spiritual response to a spiritual problem; that of our indifference and greed." The apology is not intended to put pressure on the Canadian government about its policy toward Sudan, either. "It's born out of the fact we're Christians," says Penner. "We need to ask for forgiveness."

Recently, the Sudanese government has banned humanitarian flights into the country. But Penner explains, "We've got stuff flying in and out quite often. The Sudanese government bans us all the time, but it doesn't stop us."

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Christmas/Environment

Greeting cards

Ron de Boer

By now many of you will have sent out your yearly batch of Christmas cards. If you're like most people, you sit down, take out your list of family and friends, and begin your assembly line motion of signing the bottom of a card with a snowy cabin or manger scene. You might have a stack of cards you received from last year to make sure you don't miss sending a card to anyone who sent you one because everyone knows it's not to whom you are sending the card, but for whom you are returning the courtesy of their sending a card to you. (That little guy with the fork and horns sitting on my shoulder is up to his old tricks again.)

Greeting cards. Birthday and Valentine cards. Anniversary and graduation cards. There's a greeting card for every occasion. It's bad enough pet owners can give their dog or cat a card, but now you can purchase cards that a dog would give its owner. The idea is that I would buy a card to give to my wife on behalf of our mutt.

I hate greeting cards

Ple-e-ease. I know this won't be a very popular opinion because we've all been brainwashed by sappy Hallmark commercials, but I hate greeting cards. And I know I could start up a club, too, judging by the other desperate, pathetic husbands I meet at Zellers on the Saturday night before Mother's Day. I'm betting I'm not the only one who feels the pressure of the collective consciousness that buying a greeting card is the official symbol of love to a family member.

Did you know, according to the Greeting Card Association, that we North Americans buy 10 billion (yes, that's billion) greeting cards each year and that the average card runs you close to $4? That's $40 billion on fancy cardboard with mostly inane sayings written by other people to express your feelings to someone you care about.

That means each household in America bought about 35 greeting cards this year. Women — as with underwear — buy 80 per cent of them, including most of the Mother's Day and birthday cards for their husband's mother. Guys, we're pathetic. Some other stats: Of the seasonal cards, according to the Association, Christmas is the most popular card for people to give, followed by Valentine's Day, Mother's day, Easter and Father's Day. Hmm...perhaps you Dads weren't around as much as you thought you were....

The most popular everyday card-sending situations, according to the Association, are birthdays, followed by anniversaries, Get Well and sympathy cards. If someone dies, buy a card and save yourself from coming up with something meaningful to say yourself. If someone has a birthday, a card allows you to avoid buying a present and shows your good-natured ability to make fun of someone's age.

The funny birthday card has gone beyond the territory of cliché. But it's a symbol that says we truly care and haven't forgotten that special birthday. We rush out to Pharma Plus, peruse the Shoe Box section for the really witty ones and drop it into the mouth of that insatiably hungry fire engine red mailbox. How long does Canada Post take to deliver a birthday card? you wonder. Estimated percentage of late birthday cards delivered through the mail — 65 per cent.

Guilt-ridden obligations

The little guy with the fork and horns whispers, "Most card-sending ventures are guilt-ridden obligations." Did I say that out loud? If you're the average person, you will have received 20 cards this year. Parents receive the most cards, possibly from shame-faced children who watch guilt-injecting commercials and think a card will patch up the riffs they caused during their miserable adolescent years.

I'm convinced the postal service and the greeting card companies share the same office space. Recently, the 14th annual LOUIE awards were handed out in an upscale Manhattan hotel. The LOUIES are given out to greeting card writers and companies for the best cards in about 80 different categories. Can you believe it? People dress up in tuxedos and fumble for acceptance speeches for the funniest birthday greeting or the fanciest pop up card. At the recent LOUIE awards, the U.S. Postal service was honored by the greeting card association for "delivering for us in extraordinary times," referring, of course, to September 11 and the ensuing anthrax threats in postal packages. The president of Paramount Greeting Cards went on to

Counting the cost on Kyoto

Creation waits...

John Wood

How much are you willing to spend on the slim chance that human activity is changing the earth's climate? The answer may depend upon our worldview more than we would like to admit. The science and economics of climate change have been in the news this fall with the federal move to ratify the 1997 Kyoto Accord. Some of the dialogue has been silly and some of it sound. And in the heat of this debate it is clear that more than economics and science is at stake. In the mirror called climate change we are being asked once again, "who do we trust?" and, "where does our hope lie for the future?"

Getting the facts first

One might think from the popular press or listening to the broadcast media that the science of climate change is on shaky ground. There has been a concerted effort to put a negative face on what we know about climate science. It is remarkable in all this how little we have heard from the scientific community. One lesson in the Kyoto debate is that we need better mechanisms for getting the facts. As Mark Twain once said, "Get your facts straight first. Then you can distort them at your leisure."

Canada has an excellent reputation for research on climate change. Our knowledge base and computer simulations are some of the best in the world. The sum of the best scientific thinking on climate is found in the three-volume Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports. This international work leaves little doubt about the human influence on current climate. But even if we agree that humans are altering earth's atmosphere, the question remains, "What should we do about it?

Going for the Gold in Kyoto

The Alberta government, sensing the chill that Kyoto will put on oil sands expansion has launched a vigorous media campaign to halt or at least modify the ratification process. What the Klein government is asking is: "What will it cost us, and who among us will pay?" These are good questions, but it has taken us a long time to get to this point. The Kyoto Accord has been on the table since 1997. Some readers with long memories will recall that it came out right before the Winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan. In the February 1998 column I called climate change "a problem of Olympic proportions," and it still is big. There has been plenty of time for serious study of these questions by those who are convinced we need to change.

Forward-thinking companies have already taken action. The energy conglomerate BP Canada saw the need for change in 1998. It has reduced its carbon emissions below the 1990 targets and is making money in the process. Delaying strategies will no longer work. It is time to deal with the central issues. What the Alberta challenge has done is highlight the fact that we are at an important public policy moment. Canada has the opportunity of giving leadership on this vital international issue.

Human-induced climate change as a morality tale

This past summer 70 Christian men and women from around the world met in Oxford, England to address what they called "the growing crisis of human-induced climate change." Their declaration (**www.jri.org.uk/news/statement.htm**) and the work of the Canadian Council of Churches (through KAIROS, (**www.kairoscanada.org**) and the United Church of Canada, among many others makes clear that "the Christian community has a special obligation to provide moral leadership" on this question. We need, they say, "to repent of our inaction" and to recognize that this is "a moral and religious issue."

Say it 'ain't so', and we can forget it!

So, what do you think? Is climate a moral issue? Most Canadians, it appears, feel that we need to act on Kyoto, but not without counting the cost or unfairly placing the burden on a few. When I ask my students if Kyoto is a moral question most of them say, "yes," it is a moral concern. The debate is about changing attitudes. It requires us to change our behavior, and it challenges us to be good stewards. We have a responsibility to God as creator, to other humans, and to the creatures on the planet to care for earth's climate system. This question is a window onto what we think is fundamentally right human behavior. So, now what will we do?

John R. Wood teaches environmental science at The King's University College in Edmonton.

HUGE PIANO SALE
At Redeemer University College
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Thur. 12-9
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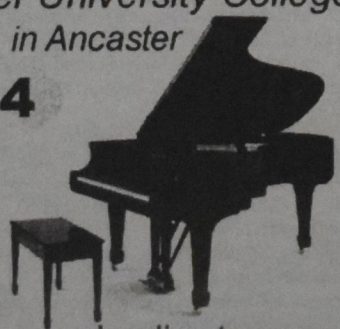
Sat. 10-7

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say, "You truly are a messenger of sympathy and love, a servant of parted friends, a consoler of the lonely and a bond of the scattered family." U.S. Deputy Postmaster John Nolan accepted the award and further impressed upon the general public the importance of sending greeting cards in these terrible times. (There's that little guy on my shoulder again, whispering evil thoughts in my ear: "Hmm. Are not the postal service and the greeting card industry using September 11th to line their pockets a bit?")

Sendability?

And consider the criteria to win a LOUIE: imagination, artistry, sendability, and value. Sendability? I can picture the judges of this category — mailbag-toting guys weighing light purple envelopes on their fingertips or giving happy nods to cards that fit into the average-sized mail slot. If you go back far enough into the history of the greeting card, you'll find a special relationship between the Post Office and card companies. In 1843, John Calcott Horsley was commissioned by Sir Henry Cole to paint a card showing the feeding and clothing of the poor. A centre panel displayed a happy family embracing one another, sipping wine, and enjoying Christmas festivities. "A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to You" was printed on each of those 1,000 original Christmas cards.

Shortly after, the Parliament of Britain passed the Postage Act, which allowed people to send a letter or card for a penny. (Hmm. How coincidental.) Sir Henry didn't send any cards the following year but the custom became popular and within 10 years after the first ever greeting card, Christmas cards were all the rage in England.

Across the ocean, Americans had to import Christmas cards from England during this time until a man name Louis Prang, a German immigrant, opened a lithographic shop in 1875 and published the first line of U.S. Christmas cards. Prang is known today as the "Father of the American Christmas Card"— hence the aforementioned LOUIE awards. His initial creations featured flowers and birds and were totally unrelated to the Christmas theme. By 1881, Prang was producing more than five million Christmas cards a year. His Yuletide scenes began to feature falling snow, fir trees, glowing fireplaces and children playing with toys.

By the late 1800s, Christmas cards became more elaborate, decorated with fringe, silk, and satin. Some were shaped like fans and crescents, others were cut into bells, birds and candles. Some folded together like maps or fitted together as puzzles. Pop-up cards revealed tiny mangers or skaters with flying scarves gliding around a mirrored pond. Today, there are some 2,000 greeting card companies who are always looking for new special occasions for which to make cards.

LINI GROL ILLUSTRATION

Now you can buy a card for Secretary Day and Grandparents Day; you can even buy a "Thanks to the church Custodian" card, although the latter don't sell very well in most churches. I think some greeting card company in Canada could make millions offering "Tim-Horton-coffee-server-thank-you" cards — what other person do we Canadians you see more faithfully than the server at the Tim's drive thru window?

The fatal mistake

I didn't always hate the greeting card. I, too, once bought cards on special occasions. Once while shopping for that special card written solely to capture my relationship with my mother-in-law, I did a very stupid thing that haunts me to this day. I had found the perfect card, something to the effect of: "I hope you have a wonderful day. Treat yourself to something special." Meaningful words don't you think? But then the fatal mistake. To get out the pale yellow envelope, I slid the card back into its spot beside the envelope and pulled them both out at the same time. Never looking at the card again, I paid for it, signed my name at the bottom and stuck the card into the envelope.

On my mother-in-law's birthday, a strange expression swept across her face. "Thanks," she said, but there were words spoken by the perplexed look on her face that said, "Thanks, I think....not sure what to make of this...I guess your heart was in the right place." I looked more closely at the card. It wasn't the one I had purchased! I picked it up. On the front was a picture of some studly cartoon guy in a bathrobe looking at the reader of the card. "Tonight it's your birthday," the front of the card said. When you opened it, you saw a blonde cartoon blonde girl — also in a bathrobe — with the words, "Let's make the most of it tonight."

Insert here a picture of me with my jaw hanging to my rib cage. Evidently I had grabbed the card on the shelf below the card — in the WIFE section. Karen still thinks I subconsciously picked it out. I now have anxiety attacks every time I walk past a card rack.

A few years later, my anti-greeting card stance was solidified when I received the same birthday card from the same relative three years in a row.

Some people, I'll admit, are really good at picking out cards — the words seem to come from them personally. My brother-in-law, Ray, has a knack for picking out humorous cards, his most common theme being, we've noticed, teasing his older sister, my wife. For Ray, irreverent cards about Karen's wrinkles are his way of getting back at Karen for her years of unrelenting superiority when they were growing up.

The best card writers I've ever seen are my English teaching colleagues, who quote Oscar Wilde and William Shakespeare lines about aging and success. A fellow teacher once wrote in an office birthday card for my 35th birthday, "You're a fine wine, better with age." Another colleague drew a little arrow to that quote and wrote, "The kind swigged by bums!" I still smile over that one.

The words I remember

And I think that's my point. The words written by the sender of the card are the ones I remember, not the bad poetry or even the clever turn of phrase by the card writer. If you're going to send a Christmas card, write something personal to the person in addition to your "So and So and family" scrawl at the bottom. Everyone knows the words on the card are meaningless — unless it's a Bible verse, of course — that you've sent the same card to everyone on your list. But your words, written specifically for the recipient, are the consequential ones, even if your handwriting is as terrible as mine.

At the risk of being kidnapped by some unmarked white van belonging to thugs hired by the greeting card industry and being mailed to a foreign country by the Postal service, I would like to make a modest proposal about cards, while promoting literacy and the book industry at the same time. My idea is this. In 2003, instead of spending $5.50 plus tax on a card that will get recycled after the week it sits on someone's window sill (another odd habit of ours — displaying our cards for others to see), go to your local Christian bookstore or Chapters and buy a book for the same price (less if you dig around the bargain bins a little). On the inside cover, write something to the person to whom you are sending it.

The postage might cost you a couple of quarters more, but you will be reassured with the knowledge that you have promoted literacy, written something meaningful that came from you, and allowed some small publishing company to make a sale that will enable it to publish more books by more writers who wish to teach more people more things. You'll also sleep easier knowing you haven't contributed to the mass waste of greeting card paper that gets hauled to the local recycling centre every day. Not only will we build enormous household libraries using this method of "card-giving," our kids might catch on that we value books, and might, if the planet is really balanced, pick one up and read it. Studies show that you need books in your house if you hope your kids will develop a love of reading. (Little guy horns: "Duhh!")

Think of it. All of us can contribute to the future of our country by substituting books for greeting cards! Two lessons I learned in Christian school: transform the world and be stewardly. We're accomplishing both reformed goals by buying books instead of greeting cards. By easing up on greeting cards and buying books, our literacy rates will go up, more kids will want to get an education, which will eventually get them high paying jobs so they will be able to buy more books.

Who knows, maybe the next generation can start giving out hardcover books for Father's Days and birthdays. Not only will you never throw away your books, you'll develop a personal history of your family. If you want to remember your 43rd birthday, all you need to do is pick up that copy of Philip Yancey's book your daughter gave you, open it to the blank page at the beginning, and read what your daughter wrote to you that day seven years ago. I'm betting you don't save most of your cards with the signatures on the bottom.

Sound like a crazy idea? That's what everyone said to Louie Prang when he started cranking out Christmas cards back in 1875, too. And they named an award after him. How about we give a golden Ronnie to the person who gives away the most books.

Church

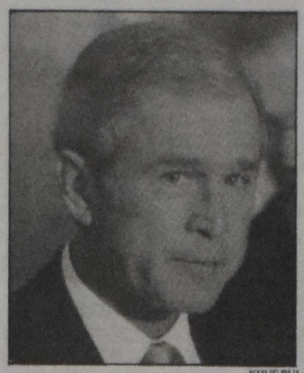
Bush distances self from anti-Islamic comments by evangelical leaders

WASHINGTON (EP) — In an effort to distance himself from conservative Christian leaders who categorize Islam as a violent religion, President Bush emphasized in mid-November that his administration views Islam as a peaceful religion.

In response to comments by both Pat Robertson and the Rev. Jerry Falwell, Bush stated at a press conference as he met with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, "Some of the comments that have been uttered about Islam do not reflect the sentiments of my government or the sentiments of most Americans. Ours is a country based upon tolerance.... And we respect the faith and we welcome people of all faiths in America, and we're not going to let the war on terror or terrorists cause us to change our values."

Bush declared that "the vast majority of American citizens respect the Islamic people and the Muslim faith. After all, there are millions of peace-loving Muslim Americans."

A day after Bush's remarks, Secretary of State Colin Powell labeled the comments by the conservative Christian leaders "hatred" that "must be rejected." Said Powell, "We will reject the kinds of



KHUE BUI

President George W. Bush

comments you have seen recently where people in this country say that Muslims are responsible for the killing of all Jews.... We cannot allow this image to go forth of America, because it is an inaccurate image of America."

Don't listen to siren song

On another occasion, during a speech to a gathering of Muslim Americans, Powell said, "We must not listen to the siren song of the bigots, extremists who cloak themselves in false spirituality in an attempt to divide and weaken us."

The comments from Bush and Powell were prompted by Robertson's warnings on his Christian Broadcasting Network that Jews in the U.S. need to "wake up, open their eyes, and read what is being said about them." He cautioned that "Adolf Hitler was bad, but what the Muslims want to do to the Jews is worse."

Similarly, in an interview on the CBS news program "60 Minutes", Falwell said that after reading both Muslim and non-Muslim writers addressing the Islamic religion, he concluded that the Prophet Mohammed "was a violent man, a man of war," and a "terrorist."

Bush has been forced to walk a political tightrope on the issue because both Robertson and Falwell are viewed with respect by a sizeable block of conservative Christian voters. Political analysts noted that the controversial remarks came at the same time that Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein has been attempting to generate anti-American sentiment among Muslims worldwide by arguing that Bush is antagonistic to Muslims and their faith.

Since the Sept. 11 attacks, the president has attempted to reach out to Muslim-Americans and to emphasize the sympathy he has for peaceful Muslims. His latest statements, pointedly directed at the comments by the conservative Christian leaders, was a further step to distance his administration from any connection with anti-Islamic rhetoric among his erstwhile supporters.

But the *Washington Times* reported that Robertson insists that both the news media and political leaders have not clued in the American people about Islam's violent history and tendency. Robertson said it would have been better had Bush never labeled Islam a peaceful religion.

He pointed out that the president "is not elected as chief theologian," and it would have made more sense had he only spoken politically about the Islamic world, and not brought it into the religious realm. He argued that Bush's comments are "leading to needless confusion."

Reported the *Times*, "The public would be better served, Mr. Robertson said, if the media would investigate the content of the Koran and what he says are many passages that incite Muslims to kill nonbelievers. But reporting on that, he said, 'is not politically correct.'"

The *Times* stated that, according to Robertson, "the violence visited on Christians in many nations, such as Sudan and Nigeria, arises from Sharia, or Muslim law, showing that the violent behavior is tied to Islamic beliefs."

Robertson defended himself against charges that his comments indicate a racist attitude, telling the *Times*, "I have never advocated ferreting out Muslims in America. They are citizens like I am. But if they are funneling money to Hamas, organizing terrorist cells, or holding anti-American rallies, they ought to be deported."

Robertson, who stepped down late last year as head of the politically conservative Christian Coalition, told the *Times* that his main focus now is Christian evangelism. "I don't want to change my ministry and become some kind of Muslim fighter," he said. Nevertheless, Robertson warned that Islam is a deeply revered faith that Muslim leaders all over the world use to push for violence against Christians and Jews.

Concluded Robertson in his interview with the *Times*, "Maybe we can counter it by American propaganda. Maybe we can counter it by love."

Islamic law issue a factor in Nigeria bloodshed, churchman says

Patrick Goodenough

(CNSNews.com) — Violence in northern Nigeria that has cost more than 200 lives has less to do with Muslim anger over the Miss World beauty contest than over the question of implementing Islamic law, a leading churchman claimed.

The Muslims instigating the bloodshed hoped to bring about a crisis that would lead to the removal of the state governor, whom they regard as an enemy for not giving his full support to Islamic law or sharia, according to Josiah Fearon, the Anglican Bishop of Kaduna.

He was speaking in a statement released through the Barnabas Fund, an international aid organization working among Christian communities in Islamic societies.

Nigerian and international media reports have tied the rioting to anger over an article in a Nigerian newspaper that questioned Muslims' opposition to the country's hosting of the Miss World contest.

This Day, a Lagos-based daily, had said that if Mohammed was alive today, he "would probably have chosen a wife" from among the beauty queens.

The article caused uproar and Muslim leaders, claiming blasphemy against the founder of their faith, issued threats against the paper and editors, prompting several published apologies.

Nonetheless, violence erupted, resulting in the deaths of more than 200, while more than 1,000 people were injured. The Red Cross of Nigeria reported that 11,000 people had fled from or been driven out of their homes.

Christians attacked without provocation

According to Fearon, Muslim youths running amok turned on local Christians without provocation, stabbing, beating and burning to death scores of people, and looting or torching more than 20 churches.

Counter-attacks by Christians resulted in the deaths of Muslims and the destruction of several mosques, he said.

According to the Kaduna-based Civil Rights Congress, at least 22 churches and eight mosques were destroyed.

Miss World organizers at the weekend evacuated the participants to Britain, where they are now seeking a new venue.

Fearon and the Barnabas Fund questioned the view that anger over the article and the beauty contest was the sole reason for the rioting. The bishop said it had merely provided an excuse for violence instigated by leaders with a political agenda.

They noted that the governor of Kaduna state has resisted a campaign by Islamic leaders to have sharia law fully implemented in the state, which has a large Christian population, unlike most parts of northern Nigeria.

Eleven other northern Nigerian states have fully introduced sharia in the past three years, a development Barnabas Fund said had been "to the detriment of their non-Muslim Christian minorities who have begun to see their freedoms eroded."

But because of the size of the Christian community in Kaduna — about 40 per cent — Makarfi had only allowed partial application of sharia, in Muslim-majority areas.

"This has infuriated Islamic religious leaders who are trying to oust him from office," the Barnabas Fund said.

Fearon said the governor had become a clear target of rioters' anger in recent days.

"Abuse, slogans and songs were chanted and shouted against him," said Fearon. "Makarfi's election posters have been defaced, stripped from walls and burnt on bonfires outside Government House.

"Our people had nothing whatsoever to do with either the [newspaper] article or this [beauty] contest, but we have been victimized by Muslim rioters for political ends," Fearon said.

Kaduna has seen serious religious violence in the past related to the sharia issue. In March 2000 up to 2,000 people were killed in rioting there.

Government blames media

Meanwhile, faced with the loss of the Miss World contest, the Nigerian government has blamed the international media. Information Minister Jerry Gana was quoted as saying the media had tried to sabotage the Miss World contest by blackening Nigeria's image.

"There's an international conspiracy just to show that an African country like Nigeria cannot host this thing. I think Nigerians should be really angry with the international press," Gana said.

President Olusegun Obasanjo told CNN Monday that "irresponsible journalism" was to blame.

Nigeria won the right to host the annual event because Miss Nigeria won last year's Miss World title. It would have been the first time an African country apart from South Africa had hosted the contest, seen as a major achievement for Nigeria. The pageant, now in its 53rd year, is watched on television by more than two billion viewers worldwide, according to the Miss World website.

Even before the offending This Day article was published, the 2002 event had faced controversy.

Some countries called for a boycott because a sharia court in another northern state, Katsina, had sentenced a Muslim woman to death by stoning for adultery.

The Nigerian government assured the organizers the sentence would not be carried out.

No stoning death sentences have yet been carried out in Nigeria's sharia states, although a number of convicted thieves have had their hands amputated in accordance with the penal code.

In the end, only five countries pulled out. There were also safety concerns for the participants after Islamic groups vowed to disrupt an event they said promoted promiscuity. Those concerns prompted organizers to postpone the event until the end of Ramadan, the Muslim fast month.

(CNSNews.com correspondent Stephen Mbogo contributed to this report.)

Church

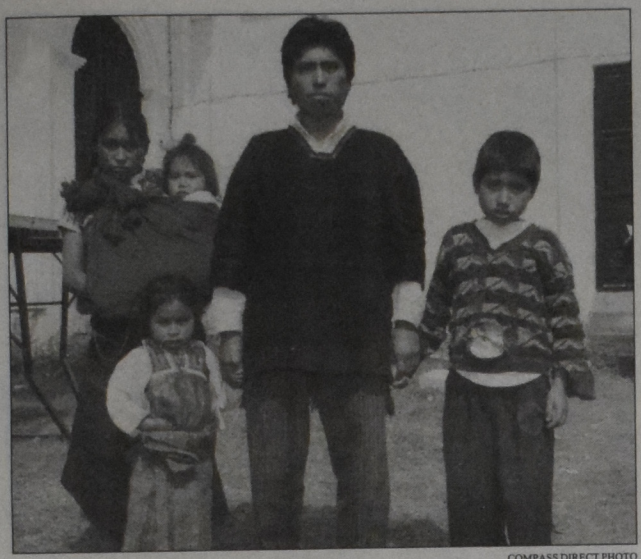
Evangelicals driven from homes in southern Mexico

David Miller

CHIAPAS, Mexico (Compass) — Traditionalist Catholic "caciques" (village leaders) in Chiapas, Mexico, accused evangelical Christians of provoking a violent confrontation that left seven people wounded by high-powered rifles. However, the 27 evangelical Christian families left homeless for two weeks following the shooting say they are not at fault.

Initial accounts reported on national TV and in front-page newspaper accounts indicated that the evangelicals, residents of the rural community of Los Pinos, opened fire on traditionalist caciques meeting inside a public school house in neighboring Tzelteltón. The villages are located in the municipality of San Juan Chamula, an area notorious for religious persecution.

The caciques claimed the attack was unprovoked and warned Chiapas governor Pablo Salazar, himself an evangelical Christian, that "the time has come to apply the law" to the alleged offenders. Otherwise, they hinted, more violence would follow.



COMPASS DIRECT PHOTO

Juan Lopez Patishtán and his family

A much different version

However, eyewitnesses to the November 14 incident describe a much different version of events. Their testimony suggests that it was the caciques themselves who did the shooting, inadvertently wounding accomplices they sent to harass the evangelicals.

Juan Lopez Patishtán of Los Pinos told Compass that he had returned home from his cornfields at 4:30 that afternoon when a group of 25 traditionalist Catholics, many of them intoxicated, dragged him from his house and forced him to accompany them to the school house in Tzelteltón. When neighbors heard Lopez's two children screaming that their father was being taken away, they ran to intercept the group and asked what they were doing.

The assailants replied that the caciques were going to put Lopez on trial in the school house, which lay about 100 yards away. When his evangelical neighbors asked what charges were being brought against Lopez, the group attacked them with sticks. A tear gas canister exploded; suddenly shots rang out from the school house.

Smoke and confusion

"We immediately fell on the ground to keep from being shot," Lopez said. "But the caciques' men kept standing and beating us with the sticks. That's how they got hit."

In the smoke and confusion, the evangelicals managed to crawl into the surrounding woods, where they spent the night with their families in order to avoid cacique search parties. The next day, the men of Los Pinos walked to the district capital of San Cristobal de las Casas to seek help, leaving their wives and children in the care of friends in another village.

Shelter at a church

Pastor Salvador Lopez was meeting with fellow Presbyterian ministers in San Cristobal when the men arrived from Los Pinos and told what had happened. Salvador Lopez helped them file reports of the episode with the offices of the Attorney for Indigenous Affairs and the Commission for Peace and Reconciliation. He also arranged for shelter and food for the 27 families — the women and children joined the men in San Cristobal a week after the shooting — at a local Presbyterian church.

Afraid to return

According to Salvador Lopez, the families were afraid to return to Los Pinos until the Chiapas state authorities provided special police protection for the area. Local police in Chamula, the evangelicals said, would not protect them from the caciques and sometimes even participated in attacks.

At present, the families have returned to Los Pinos and no further violence has been reported. However, Salvador Lopez, who was expelled along with his entire family more than 30 years ago from their ancestral community in San Juan Chamula, thinks violence could flare again soon.

"There is no security for us," he said. "We can only trust in help from above."

Renewed round of religious violence

Some veteran observers believe the Tzelteltón attack signals a renewed round of religious violence in the Chiapas highlands, which for the past two years has enjoyed a reprieve from decades of harsh persecution. Traditionalist Catholic caciques there practice a bizarre blend of ancient Mayan religion and unorthodox Christianity, and loathe evangelicals for their refusal to honor pagan deities or participate in drunken festivals.

Governor Salazar, however, has worked to keep religious persecution in check since assuming office two years ago. In this he has received a measure of co-operation from Jose Gomez Gomez, the current president of the cacique council of San Juan Chamula, who evangelicals say is tolerant of their religious rights.

However, evangelical Christians noticed a sharp increase in attacks against them earlier this year, soon after Domingo Patishtán Patishtán joined the Chamula cacique council. Originally from Tzelteltón, Patishtán forced evangelicals out of that community in 1995 by refusing to allow their children to enroll in the local public school.

Resentment toward evangelicals

Like Patishtán, another member of the powerful cacique council, Vice President Juan Lopez Heredia, has made no secret of his resentment toward evangelicals. Lopez Heredia, among the first to blame the evangelicals for the Tzelteltón attack, acted as the cacique's public spokesman to warn Governor Salazar to take action against the evangelicals or face reprisals.

According to San Cristobal attorney Abdías Tovilla, a veteran defender of religious rights in Chiapas, this kind of posturing is really geared to provoke more attacks against evangelical Christians. Caciques can justify aggression by insinuating that evangelicals deserve punishment for alleged crimes.

"These people are very good at lying," Tovilla said.

"In a case like this, where you have caciques wounded by their own caciques, who turn around and cast blame on the brethren, it is very, very dangerous," he warned. "Very dangerous because vengeance among Chamulas is cruel indeed. Entire families have been wiped out."

Canadian government, Anglicans reach agreement on liability in abuse cases

Ferdy Baglo

Vancouver (ENI) — The Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) has reached an agreement with the Canadian government for sharing the multi-million dollar cost of settling abuse claims filed by 5,000 former students of now-defunct residential schools for indigenous children.

Lawsuits have been filed against the government and four church denominations by 12,000 people claiming they were sexually, emotionally, physically and culturally abused at about 80 church-run federal schools for Native Canadian children operating from 1820 until 1969.

Roman Catholics have been named in 70 per cent of the lawsuits, Anglicans in 18 per cent of them and United and Presbyterian churches in the remainder. The cost of settling all of the suits is expected to be about $1 billion.

The agreement announced on Tuesday requires the ACC to pay 30 per cent of the compensation costs for the cases involving Anglican institutions, up to a maximum of $25 million, and the government to cover the remaining 70 per cent.

Preoccupied with litigation

"For some years, we have been preoccupied with litigation," said Archbishop Michael Peers, the primate of the ACC, at a nationally televised press conference.

"We can now return to our principal occupation, serving God and God's world in ministries of healing, reconciliation and compassion."

Anglicans across Canada must vote on the agreement by Christmas before it can go into effect.

Without an agreement, the ACC faced compensation and litigation costs of an estimated $60 million and possible bankruptcy. The Anglican Diocese of Cariboo in the province of British Columbia was forced to disband in January due to legal costs in connection with a school the diocese had operated on behalf of the government.

Ralph Goodale, public works minister in charge of the Office of Indian Residential Schools Resolution, said the compensation to aboriginal victims was "for valid claims of physical and sexual abuse."

A commitment to victims

"Our agreement is a commitment to the victims of abuse to try and bring an end to the hurt and the pain and the personal suffering," the government minister said.

Each claimant can now either accept the offer or continue fighting in the courts.

In 1996, a six-volume, 4,000-page report by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples costing $53 million was issued after a five-year investigation into the treatment of Canada's indigenous peoples. It called for the churches and federal government to apologize officially to abuse victims.

The Anglican and United Churches have both apologized, but so far the government has not.

The Anglican Church of Canada has about 750,000 active members in 1850 parishes across the country. According to a national census, more than two million of Canada's 30 million population consider themselves Anglican.

Christmas

Who's afraid of a Christmas decoration?

Many early paintings on Biblical themes swarm with chubby, naked babies with wings. Most fly about in the sky. These are romping in the grass as Mary and Joseph make a rest stop on their way to Egypt. (Detail of The Rest on the Flight into Egypt by Anthony Van Dyck, c. 1630)

Sue Careless

When angels speak in Scripture they usually begin, "Do not be afraid." What are we missing?

At Christmas, angels perch atop the tree or take centre stage at the church pageant. Try to sing a Christmas carol without mentioning the celestial beings. But after New Year, we pack up angels with the other ornaments, reviving them only as felt board cut-outs to tell children about Daniel in the lion's den or Jacob's ladder.

Bible saturated with angels

Yet the Bible is saturated with angels, particularly in the apocalyptic literature of Daniel and Revelation. The latter makes reference to angels 70 times.

Angel comes from the Greek, *angelos*, which means messenger. Angels are God's servants who do his bidding and minister to his people on earth. As the writer to the Hebrews says, "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?" (Hebrews 1:4)

Angels break through our materialistic world to manifest a spiritual reality. New Age devotees yearn for the mystical and even our secular society flirts with angels. But to be enraptured only by the spiritual messenger is to fall in love with the mailman and ignore the love letters he bears from our heavenly king, to miss all his royal tidings, announcements, invitations and counsels. Angel worship means being infatuated with the telephone operator and losing the chance to connect with the Triune God.

We tend to make angels into our own image. Early medieval paintings, in which humans are portrayed as slender and angular, are seen with similarly slim celestial beings. By the Baroque period, not only are the humans hefty, so are their angelic companions.

Marketing the mystical

Television angels are exclusively focused on the happiness of humans not the long-term goals of God. Our consumer society markets the mystical as cute and cuddly. We assume we can domesticate celestial beings and manipulate them to do our bidding, when they are only God's to command. How could we ever tame the biblical angels who appear like lightning and speak with thunder?

Unlike the charming, cigarette-smoking spirit in the movie, *Michael*, angels can be so terrifying to confront that their usual biblical greeting is "Fear not!" Heaven's heralds are a strong antidote to the current obsession with insipid and cloying angels. The chubby cherub of Western art is based more on pagan Roman sculpture than Scripture.

Daniel isn't confronted with an adorable, winged toddler, but "a man dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold around his waist. His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze and his voice like the sound of a multitude" (Daniel 10:4-21). Only Daniel saw the vision, but he turned deathly pale and mute. Such terror so overwhelmed his attendants that they fled.

During the Renaissance, Mary was often depicted as a noble lady, and the angel also becomes high-class. In some painting, they look like ladies-in-waiting. (Detail of The Annunciation, by Fra Angelico, c. 1450)

Some of Raphael's angels take on a heroic muscularity. (Detail of Madonna del Baldacchino by Raphael, c. 1507)

Angels are above the order of men. Sinful humans cannot see God and live. Heavenly angels enjoy God face to face and from such intimacy reflect his holiness and purity, so much so they are sometimes called "the holy ones" or "the sons of God".

Intelligence and will

Unlike God, angels are not eternal, but are created spirits who "shouted for joy" at the creation (Job 38:7). They are not automatons. They possess intelligence and will and obey God freely. Some, led by Lucifer, chose to rebel. "There was war in heaven," Revelation declares, and Jesus said, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." He was "hurled to earth and his angels with him."

Angels are identified not only with swift flight (the seraphim have six wings the cherubim, four). They deal in fire and light. In Muslim art, angels have flames of fire above their heads reminiscent of the disciples at Pentecost.

One "mighty angel" in Revelation, Chapter 10, is "robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars." He gave a loud shout "like the roar of a lion." Of another angel, John wrote, "the earth was illuminated by his splendor" (Revelation 18:1).

Executing judgement

Holy angels perform God's particular commands for nations and individuals, executing judgement and giving succour. After Adam and Eve were expelled, an angel guarded the Garden of Eden. Angels helped deliver the law at Sinai, led the Israelites through the wilderness, announced various births and callings and sustained the prophets. In the Old Testament, angels executed God's judgement on the wicked and will do likewise at the Last Judgement.

Angels remind us of how much Christ humbled himself to take on our nature. Man was made "little lower than the angels" and in his Incarnation, Jesus came not as a mighty archangel, but suffering in human form to save not the fallen angels, but sinful humans.

Angels ministered to Christ after his temptation in the wilderness and again during his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus tells Peter he could have commanded "more than twelve legions of angels" to prevent his arrest. At his crucifixion he accepts the wrath of God unmitigated by any angelic rescue or solace. He is truly forsaken.

Still Jesus will come again in glory and he won't be alone. "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man" (John 1:51), an image reminiscent of Jacob's ladder.

Angels not idle

Nor are angels idle after Pentecost. In the early church, angels instruct Cornelius and Philip, and free Peter from prison.

Roman Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox believe that every Christian is protected, body and soul, by a guardian angel who intercedes for her. Their teaching is based on Jesus' saying, "... do not despise one of these little ones [children], because I say to you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 18:10). Some Protestants also believe in guardian angels but do not seek their intercession.

Angels can teach us the selfless song of adoration. The four living creatures, angelic beings with six wings and covered with eyes (nothing escapes their attention) guard the heavenly throne and lead in the worship, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come" (Revelation 4:8). John hears this ceaseless adoration of "ten thousand times ten thousand angels" as "the roar of rushing waters and great peals of thunder".

We should worship with them. Indeed, we never pray alone. We are to be caught up in the worship of heaven. Some Christians too easily slip into 'just Jesus and me' piety, a dangerously egocentric and isolating individualism. We want casual intimacy with our Beloved, even as he is being worshiped by all the heavenly host.

Contrary to popular belief, we

There are angel choirs, but also bands of angels. More play trumpets than harps. (Detail of A Choir of Angels by Simon Marmion, c. 1459)

will not become angels when we die. Rather angels will bear the faithful to heaven, as Jesus said Lazarus was borne by angels to the bosom of Abraham. There the bodily resurrected saints will rejoice with the angelic spirits in glory.

When we are spiritually blind or short-sighted, angels are hard to recognize. The pagan prophet Balaam couldn't see the sword-bearing angel on the road that his more enlightened donkey swerved to avoid.

This is the Archangel Raphael, who has some warrior traits. His wings and robe glisten like gold. (Archangel Raphael, Naples, Italy, late 16th century)

Heaven's secret service

If heaven has a secret service, it is staffed by angels. Like Elisha's servant we can be so overwhelmed by the visible forces of evil that we fail to sense the invisible reality of God's power encompassing us. The prophet reassures his servant, "Do not be afraid. Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then Elisha prays, "O Lord, open his eyes that he may see." The servant is astonished to see, "the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha" (2 Kings 6:8-17).

Nor are angels always what they appear to be. What looks like a man, can actually be an angel and what appears to be an angel, can be God himself.

Abraham's three visitors at Mamre seem at first to be men, yet one is "the Lord" and two are angels who hurry to save Lot from the destruction of Sodom. "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for in so doing some people have entertained angels unawares," wrote the author of the Hebrews.

God in visible form

This brief appearance of God in visible form is called a theophany. Other Old Testament theophanies include God wrestling as a man with Jacob and later walking as the fourth man in the fiery furnace. In fact, in the Old Testament the expression "the angel of the Lord" is a special manifestation of God himself to man.

Durer's The Four Avenging Angels *(detail above) are a far cry from the sweet cherubs and the pretty, maiden-like angels in many pictures of Mary. They carry the sword of judgment.*

When "the angel of the Lord" consoles Hagar in the desert and announces to her the birth of Ishmael, she recognizes, "You are the God who sees me. I have now seen the One who sees me" (Genesis 16). The "angel of the Lord", that is God himself, stops Abraham from sacrificing Isaac. He also speaks to Moses at the burning bush and to Gideon at Ophrah.

Mirroring dazzling light

Even when angels are simply angels, not God veiled, they can mirror the dazzling light of God's divinity. Yet angels are still fellow servants, with us, of God. We should not ignore angels but nor should we worship them. Twice John was so overwhelmed by all that the angel revealed in the apocalypse that he "fell at his feet to worship him." But the angel rebukes him, "Do not do it. I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God" (Revelation 19).

Since 325 AD, Christians have quoted Colossians 1:16, as part of the Nicene Creed. "I believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible...."

We impoverish ourselves if we choose to ignore the invisible. The spiritual and the physical creation are both real and we should rejoice as much in the seraphim as in the starfish. We should delight that our Creator made cherubim and cheetahs, atoms, archangels and auroras. For the Christian, creation stretches beyond the galaxies to the highest heavens. We simply need to unbox it all.

Ready for Christmas?

Intangible Things

Heidi VanDerSlikke

From the warmth of the sofa I watched the snow blasting across our front field. The cars on Highway 9 crept along at half their usual speed, fighting the blustering wind. The last thing I wanted to do was go outside. But Harley's needle sharp teeth on my hand snapped me back to reality. His bright eyes stared expectantly at me, his tail thumping the coffee table.

"Okay, pup," I murmured, patting his fluffy head, "Let me have a coffee first." As I made my way into the kitchen Harley clamped onto my pant leg, dancing around my feet. He'd been good all morning, but his energy now overflowed. Whether I liked it or not, Harley needed a walk.

At least one of us is excited

I donned my son's snowmobile suit and a pair of heavy boots, looking like the Michelin Man as we headed out onto the fields. Shielding my face with one gloved hand, I pulled my toque a little further down with the other. Harley pranced and leapt through the snow ahead of me. *At least one of us is excited,* I thought.

Grey clouds hung low overhead, heavy with snow, bursting at the seams like huge, overstuffed feather pillows. It made me think of a line in a C. S. Lewis book, where Narnia was under an evil spell and it was "always December, but never Christmas."

I remembered days like that. Grim and cheerless. Sometime after I found out there was no Santa Claus I began to see not only Christmas, but life as something of an empty celebration. Without Jesus in my life it was like so much tinsel and colored lights. It all looked good, but it wasn't really worth much. The problem was a lack of significance. There was simply no reason for being, no matter how much external decorating I tried to do.

In the grand scheme of things

As Harley and I came closer to home I began thinking how much that has changed. I still struggle with feelings of emptiness, and often wonder at my own significance, And yet, with Christ as the centre of my life, I am drawn back time and time again to my purpose in the grand scheme of things. Life is bigger than me. Life is a gift from God, not something I can control, but something I'm supposed to be grateful for every day that's ordained for me.

I opened the door to the house, and the smell of soup simmering on the stove welcomed me home. I flicked on the living room lights and smiled at the glow from the Christmas tree as it illuminated a dreary December afternoon. Jessica had insisted on putting up the tree at the end of November, as she does every year. I resisted her, as I always do, protesting that it was too early for Christmas, but knowing in my heart that Christmas decorations can be therapeutic to a winter- bound Canadian.

An undeniable spark continues to burn

It made me think of the way Christ came into my life. I wasn't ready for him either. There was way too much baggage to be dealt with, too much spiritual housekeeping that needed to be done. And yet he came in his time, not mine. It wasn't about my being ready. It was about him being Savior. Jesus Christ entered that bleak heart of mine and brought light to a once dark place. I'll admit, sometimes I don't exactly glow, but there's an undeniable spark inside me that continues to burn, even when I close my eyes to it.

I used to feel pressure when people asked, "So are you ready for Christmas?" They were talking about writing cards, buying gifts and planning meals. Over the years I've come to understand that those activities are just ways of making Christmas stand out on the calendar. They aren't the reason for celebrating. Our reason is foretold in Isaiah 9:6, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given." So now, even on the darkest December afternoon, even when I really don't feel like it, when someone asks me if I'm ready for Christmas, I can answer with a "yes" sincere enough to bounce off the hills of Judea and blend with the angel voices that declared, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

Heidi VanderSlikke lives in Harriston, Ont.

Christmas

Lasting light

ILLUSTRATIONS (2) BY JEAN E. MERKEL

Beatrice Vandervelde

"Oh, look. It's snowing. We *are* going to have a white Christmas. Look, Aunt D, look at those big, thick flakes."

Rosslyn is standing by the window, open-mouthed. The world is so new and pretty she doesn't know where to look first. She keeps turning to see if her aunt is coming. Why is she taking so long when this miracle is taking place, a fairy tale world appearing right outside their door?

Sister Dorcas hears her young niece's eager cries coming from the living room and shakes her gray head. To get that excited about snow — as if she's never seen it before. Rosslyn is from Canada, for heaven's sake. Surely she's used to snow. Snow is a bother, that's what. It makes it difficult to get around on foot and driving in it is no fun either. But there you are — the weather is not in our hands.

She finishes brushing her teeth, then joins Rosslyn at the window.

"Do you think some of the people here will want their walk or driveway shoveled?" Rosslyn asks.

"Not yet, in any case," her aunt answers bluntly. "If you did it now, they'd just have to do it again in a bit."

"I wasn't thinking of right now. I was thinking of later, after I've played with the kids. I'll bet they can't wait."

Rosslyn hopes for a huge snowfall this time, not the sprinklings they've had so far. She's excited for herself, but even more for the Kitahara children, the children of a Japanese scholar studying at the Religious Research Centre this year. Yoko and Nouki have never even seen snow before. She wants them to experience the fun of winter. She wants to make snowballs, have snowball fights, make snow people, jump in the snow, make tracks in it, make snow angels. This will all be new to them and such fun.

"I'm going to see if the kids want to go out," she says and proceeds to get dressed.

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Running down the sidewalk between the buildings, she leaves a trail of grey footprints.

From behind the window, Yoko and Nouki are watching the white powder fall from the sky. Rosslyn waves to them. "Come out," she calls. "Come out and play." She bends down to grab a handful of snow, throws it straight up and watches it come down on her, covering her new coat and hat. She turns her face up to the falling snow, closes her eyes and sticks out her tongue, feeling the tiniest prickle as the snow touches and vanishes.

It doesn't take long for the two children to join her. Four-year-old Nouki, his short little legs in snowpants and boots, can hardly move, but he soon forgets his discomfort when Rosslyn points out the little clown face tracks his boots make.

"Aw, not fair," Yoko says. "I want nice track, too."

"Yours *are* nice. Look at the pretty design," Rosslyn tells her. "Let's walk beside each other and make long rows of tracks."

They walk, hop, tip-toe, and walk backwards. Nouki feels important leaving such fancy tracks and he prances about with more energy than he's ever shown before. But when it's time to go in, there are problems. He wants to gather all his tracks and take them inside with him.

"You can't," Rosslyn tries to explain. "It's just tracks in the snow, Nouki. You can't take them in."

"Mine!" he screams, beating his little chest. He stamps his foot. "Mine!" he screams again.

Finally Rosslyn has an idea. With a shovel she scoops up a track and carefully deposits it under the carport by the Kitahara's apartment. She makes such a production of it that Nouki is satisfied, forgetting all about his other tracks.

"If it keeps snowing we'll make snow people tomorrow," Rosslyn promises.

"Snow people? What are snow people?" eight-year-old Yoko asks.

"Big secret," Rosslyn answers, smiling mysteriously. "You'll see tomorrow."

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But she can't keep her promise. Aunt D has other plans and they are gone for the weekend. Meanwhile, it keeps snowing. By the time they come back, there are piles of snow as high as the hedges.

"Look at that, Aunt D. It must have snowed 24 hours a day while we were gone."

"It could hardly snow longer," her aunt observes dryly.

Just before they turn into the drive leading to the Research Centre apartments, Rosslyn suddenly cries out in delight. "Oh, look. Look what the neighbors did. Isn't that clever?"

A huge snowman stands guard at the edge of the driveway leading to their yard. But on the wrap-around veranda of their house they have created a family. There are four of them — one big, one medium, and two smaller figures.

"I hope the kids haven't seen this yet. *I* want to show it to them."

"You'll have lots of opportunity to show them new things. There's the tree lighting this coming weekend, have you thought of that?"

"What's the tree lighting?"

After Aunt D explains, Rosslyn asks the Kitaharas if she may take their children. "Tree lighting?" Mr. Kitahara asks. "You mean, put trees on fire?"

"No, no." Rosslyn explains what will happen.

"We all go," Mr. Kitahara decides. "I take pictures. You drive with us."

Rosslyn nods. She'd much rather walk. Walking there in the dark with only the stars as lights and the snow brightening up the night would get them right in the mood. Driving? Oh, well. She knows there's no use arguing with Mr. Kitahara.

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Toward the end of the week there is all kinds of activity in the woods beyond the prep school Rosslyn attends on campus, but it isn't until she goes home Friday evening that she connects it to the tree lighting. By then a huge evergreen lies bound on a wagon on the dead end road just beyond the dorms.

Rosslyn hurries home. She's too excited to eat and too impatient to study or do chores. The minutes drag by, every minute a full 60 seconds. Will six o'clock never come? Finally she decides to change the bedding a day early and get the laundry done. It's better to be busy — the minutes seems to sneak by faster when she isn't staring at the second hand.

When she and the Kitaharas arrive at the abbey that evening, a long line of people are already waiting for the festivities to start. Joining the hushed crowd, Rosslyn urges the children, "Stand close together. Then you won't be cold." After a while, she wiggles her toes up and down inside her boots; the rest of her is still toasty warm.

As soon as the abbey bells ring the hour and the sound of the chimes has faded, two rows of monks, their path lit by flaming torches, wind their way from the monastery. All of them are dressed in their long, black robes. Silently they come on either side of the waiting crowd. When the first monks reach the front of the line, they raise their torches high and begin to sing, "Silent night, holy night." Shivers go up and down Rosslyn's spine as she and the crowd join in, "All is calm, all is bright." Slowly the procession moves toward the school, then the road beyond.

As soon as one carol is done, the monks start another. Rosslyn doesn't always know the verses, but it doesn't matter. It's being there that counts — the monks' voices a choir of praise to join, or listen to. Together the group collects the wagon with the tree and brings it to the green, a square in front of the abbey. There the caroling stops while the monks pull on the various ropes to raise the tree in the middle of the square. When it stands perfectly straight and is secured, everyone backs away, forming a big circle around the tree. A monk cuts the ropes holding the branches close to the trunk. "Ooh!" the crowd sighs as the huge tree slowly regains its shape.

"Wow!" Yoko whispers. "So big."

"Oh, Christmas Tree; oh, Christmas tree," the monks sing. After several lines, they hang onto the word "tree" at the end of a phrase, then stop abruptly. In the hush that follows, the torches are extinguished. For one second it is pitch dark; then the lights flash on. Hundreds of little bulbs sparkle from the tree. Rosslyn is speechless. How have they done it? She squeezes Yoko's hand, whispering, "Isn't it gorgeous? Oh, I love Christmas."

They sing several more carols: "O come, all ye faithful," "While shepherds watched their flocks by night," "Oh, little town of Bethlehem." The evening ends with, "We wish you a merry Christmas." After the last note has sounded, the monks turn to the people, thank them for coming and invite them to services in the abbey throughout the advent season. Conversations bubble up as people meet old friends and greet neighbors. Gradually the crowd thins. People drift away — to their cars, to the dorms, back to the monastery.

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Nouki is almost asleep in his father's arms but his sister is wide awake. Yoko and Rosslyn swing their arms back and forth as hand in hand they walk away from all the lights. At the car they turn to look once more. "Will the lights stay on all night?" Yoko asks wistfully.

"Aunt D says they go off at midnight — to save power, you know," Rosslyn answers.

"I think I like Christmas, too," Yoko says, giving her big friend a hug.

"Wait till you hear the *real* story," Rosslyn tells her as the two of them climb into the back of the van for the short drive home. "It's about a light that *never* goes out."

Beatrice Vandervelde is the author of a picture book and a juvenile novel (published this fall). She lives in Toronto and is a member of the Willowdale Christian Reformed Church. Jean E. Merkel is an artist and musician who lives in Fort Collins, Colorado.

Teaching our children about true Christmas giving

Lisa M. Petsche

For the past three years, my family has participated in a Christmas outreach project involving the distribution of gift-filled shoeboxes to Canadian children from low-income families, primarily located in remote northern communities.

Many forms of giving

The project is a wonderful example of how giving can take many forms. Some participants go to dollar stores and liquidation centres in search of inexpensive gifts, while others search their homes for unused or nearly new items to donate. Still others knit mittens and slippers. Some approach local businesses and ask for donations in kind. One person contributes a Christmas card with a personal message for each recipient. Several people pre-wrap the shoeboxes in festive paper. A sizable group participates in a culminating "shoebox party," where donations are pooled and boxes are custom filled according to the age and gender of each child on the list.

Organizers were pleasantly surprised to receive thank-you letters from some of last year's recipients. It was rewarding but sobering to learn how appreciative these kids were of items most of us take for granted, like slippers, hats, gloves, pencils and shampoo.

In an effort to convey how much she treasured her gifts and wished to preserve them, one girl wrote, "I use all of my stuff only sometimes." Another commented on the beautiful wrapping paper on her box. One boy shared that his younger brother "was starting to get mad at me, because I would not play with him. I wanted to enjoy the presents I got." Then there was the girl who raved for a whole paragraph about the hand mirror she'd received, concluding, "It's nice, beautiful, and really special to me."

SAMARITAN'S PURSE

These girls were among 100,000 children in Ukraine who received shoe box gifts from Samaritan Purse's Operation Christmas Child in 1999.

De-emphasizing commercial aspects

As Christmas approaches once more, many parents, like my husband and me, are consciously seeking ways to de-emphasize the commercial aspects of the season, which can so easily overshadow its real meaning. One way to do this is to turn our family's attention outward, increasing our awareness of the needs of others and finding ways to address them.

In my family, we've developed a special interest in children in need, both close to home and in other parts of the world.

Just last month the Canadian Council on Social Development released its disturbing report, The Progress of Canada's Children 2002, indicating that an increasing number of Canadian children are going hungry. Meanwhile, at the global level, an estimated 24,000 people — three-quarters of them children under age five — die every day from hunger or hunger-related causes, according to the United Nations Hunger Project. Clearly, there is much to be done in terms of charitable works (short-term solutions) and social justice initiatives (long-term solutions) in order to achieve an equitable sharing of Earth's resources, so that everyone has a healthy and dignified quality of life.

Advent activities for kids

I'm pleased to have found a wonderful little book, *Christmas at Home: 101 Advent Activities for Kids* (Ellyn Sanna, Barbour Publishing, 2000), which offers a wide variety of ways for families to bear witness to the true meaning of Christmas. Outreach suggestions include: hosting a shower for baby Jesus within your church community, donating the gifts to a home for teenage mothers; sorting through toy boxes and closets for unused or nearly new items to donate to a shelter; having soup-and-bread dinners and sending the money saved on food to an overseas relief organization; organizing a mitten tree at school or elsewhere and giving the donations to a homeless shelter; volunteering at a soup kitchen; going grocery shopping together, filling a bag of favorite Christmas foods and taking it to a community food cupboard (approximately half of food bank recipients are children); and taking advantage of cards and gifts available from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) or other organizations that seek to improve the lives of disadvantaged children and families.

Such helping endeavors also provide our own children with valuable gifts: an awareness of the many blessings they take for granted; compassion for those less fortunate — victims of poverty, famine, disease, war, natural disaster and oppression; a spirit of sharing, in keeping with God's law of love; and the satisfaction that comes from making a difference.

Lisa M. Petsche is a mother of three, social worker and freelance writer.

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Christmas

A Savior has been born to you: He is Christ the Lord

Harry der Nederlanden

At Christmas amid the celebrations of a supposedly Christian society, those who call themselves followers of the Christ need to swim against the stream to keep themselves attuned to the heart of the biblical Christmas message. We are less threatened, I believe, by the banishment of explicitly Christian symbols and songs from public spaces than by a sentimentalized Christmas that is all about retreating into the warmth of our own safe family circle, away from the darkness and cold of the outer world.

Not that we may not enjoy the warmth of fellowship, the sparkle of the lights and the sound of hymns celebrating peace on earth and God's love for mankind. But unless these emotions of good will toward one another are rooted in something stronger and deeper, the whole event becomes a temporary flight into fantasy, a self-indulgence, a crying of 'Peace, peace!' when there is no peace.

One of the first confessions of the early church was Kyrios Jesus – Jesus is Lord. The church knew that all the good things associated with the name of Jesus — mercy and love from God to mankind, the forgiveness of sins and the healing of all our diseases, the liberation of all from the bondage of sin, and the renewal of the earth so it will sustain all in equity and peace — can be realistically celebrated only if he really is Lord and acknowledged as such.

Although we celebrate an event that happened some 2000 years ago, we do so with joy and triumph because he is Lord today, and because of this lordship we can look forward with full confidence to his return in glory when we shall sing with the saints of all ages: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever."

Virgin and Child, *12th century Romanesque Art: Most Medieval depictions of Mary and Joseph make no effort to portray a mother and a baby. The baby Jesus is already a smaller version of the Christ reigning in glory that we see in the tympanum (see next illustration).*

But as Abraham Kuyper observed about 100 years ago when he wrote his three-volume meditation on Christ's kingship *Pro Rege*, the biggest threat to the confession of the lordship of Jesus Christ is perhaps less from the world than from believers themselves. When we become pietistic and reduce the message of salvation to one that addresses only the inner condition of the soul in its personal relationship to God, or when we dilute it into a spiritual dimension superadded to a life otherwise lived according to the agendas and rhythms of the world, we practically deny him as Lord and King – even when we continue to sing, "Crown him Lord of all" in church.

We can also grow weary and cynical about our own efforts to express and embody this confession when we see so little genuine love, forgiveness and freedom in evidence. And I'm not just speaking of the so-called "secular" realm, where CEOs, already paid obscene salaries, try to skim even more into their own pockets; I'm also talking about Christian churches and institutions. We read of sexual abuse by priests and pastors, about abuse and marital break-ups in Christian families, about Christian employers who are tyrants, and so on. Christians, it seems, are not hugely different from the rest of society. Are we perhaps fooling ourselves that all the effort we pump into creating institutions to which we attach the name of our Lord are really spaces where this new order of justice, peace and love is an effective witness to the renewing power of his grace? When we see so few differences, we are tempted to spiritualize the nature of his lordship and conceive it as something mystical and invisible.

There is another brake on our enthusiastic celebration of the humble babe of Bethlehem as Lord and King. Perhaps never before have so many people been so acutely aware of how power and authority have been abused over and over again. We have become deeply suspicious of the language and trappings of power and authority, the very things summed up in the term lordship, whether that be in the state, in the church, in business or in the family. Lord Acton's dictum that power corrupts applies not only in the realm of princes and presidents but also in the realm of parents, pop stars, priests, corporate executives and professional basketball players. Today we are tempted to consign power and lordship as inherently corrupt and corrupting.

That's why at Christmas we profit from a reminder of one of the great themes which have inspired musicians and painters to unparalleled expressions of the hopes of men, women and children everywhere beset by darkness for a Lord who overcomes the darkness and inaugurates a new order in which peace will flow like a river and righteousness like the waves of the sea from him who holds all rivers and seas in his dominion.

As Van Ruler points out, right from the beginning the Gospels proclaim the child born in Bethlehem as Lord. Luke tells us that the angel who appeared to Zechariah promises that the son to be born to him will "go

Christ reigning tympanum at St. Pierre, Moissac, c. 1115-35. *The large cathedrals built during the Middle Ages usually had one doorway with an arched sculpture over it of Christ enthroned in heaven. Often the arch over another door depicted Mary with Jesus on her lap blessing the people.*

before the Lord ... to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." And when Zechariah regains his voice, he prophecies that his newborn son John "will go before the Lord to prepare the way for him,

to give his people the knowledge of salvation
through forgiveness of their sins,
because of the tender mercy of our God,
by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven
to shine on those living in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the path of peace."

The angel Gabriel who appears to Mary tells her that the child she will bear "will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

Likewise, the good news that the angel host proclaims to the shepherds is that the Savior lying in the manger is nothing less than "Christ the Lord."

The entirety of Jesus' life and ministry circles around the theme of the kingdom and the nature of God's rule as embodied in himself, Son of God and Son of Man.

When the Gospel writers go to work, they are, of course, not engaged in an effort to report the facts and nothing but the facts; they are employing all the resources of memory, tradition and language to relate the meaning of Jesus' person and mission to convince their readers that this man, crucified under Pontius Pilate was the promised Messiah. There is, thus, quite a bit of truth to the contention that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John report the events of Christ's life in the light of the end, for only after he was crucified, rose again and ascended into heaven, and after the Holy Spirit was given to the church, did they really began to understand who it was they had spent their days following around on the dusty streets of Palestine.

Matthew begins his story by giving us Jesus' genealogy, a list of ancestors that serves as a synopsis of a long history culminating in his birth. Luke does something similar, except he approaches the birth scene from the viewpoint of different people receiving the news of the Messiah in different manners. First, we get a member of the priesthood, Zechariah, who receives it with skepticism. Then comes the annunciation to Mary, who responds with amazing composure and faith. The next to hear the good news are the shepherds, who hurry to see what the angels have announced to them. Then follows the welcome of an old man, seemingly selected at random from among the many faithful in Israel looking forward to the coming of the Messiah. So Luke creates a diverse audience for Jesus' birth, but it's a rather odd selection.

This painting of the massacre of baby boys shows it happening in a town like the painter's audience lived in. Detail of painting by Hans Memlinc, 1480.

Christmas

Flight into Egypt, by Rubens, 1614. *Rubens' portrayal of the flight into Egypt shows the donkey being led by an angel. In many other depictions, they are surrounded by angels. A painting of the flight by Van Eyck includes a number of fat little cherubs romping in the grass while Mary rests (See Careless article, p. 10).*

For generation after generation the chosen people of God, appointed to serve as God's home base among the nations of the world, have awaited a Messiah, a prince of peace who will reign with righteousness and bring healing to the people. Since both Moses and David served as forerunners or shadows of this Holy One who would be both king and judge, was it any wonder that they were expecting someone of high birth, someone born of a prominent family near the seats of power? It's almost as if God is deliberately playing a game of misdirection with his people – leading them on to look in one place, and then — presto! – producing the Messiah in a completely unexpected place.

Take another look at Matthew: after tracing Jesus' lineage to establish credentials for him that will convince a Jewish audience, Matthew seems to undermine his efforts by telling them that the only ones to recognize the promised king of the Jews were, that's right, Magi from the heathen east. That's hardly a good public relations move. The Jews were even less inclined to look for wisdom from the east than George Bush expects it from Iraq. And the respected religious leaders of Israel play a very unflattering role (as they do throughout the Gospels), for they supply Herod with information that leads to the murder of babies – but they show no inclination to join the Magi in welcoming the Christ whose star has appeared.

When Herod's evil plot is revealed, where do the parents of the Messiah flee for safety? To Egypt, back to the house of bondage from which Jahweh rescued them, an event that defines their very being as a people. Another detail that would put a good Jew's teeth on edge. If Matthew was intent only on relating details that would "sell" his story to a Jewish audience, these are hardly the sorts of things he'd choose.

Yet, those same details do pick up on the religious traditions of the Jews, but always in unexpected ways. The Magi do hail from a part of the spiritual geography of the Old Testament associated with the heathenism and idolatry the Patriarchs left behind and where raiding armies often came from to attack Israel. Yet, their arrival bearing gifts also enacted a scene from prophecy. When Isaiah envisions the glorious future God has in store for his people Israel, he cries out, "Arise, shine, for your light is come and the glory of the Lord rises upon you." After speaking the words echoed by Zechariah and applied to the coming of Jesus as Lord, Isaiah goes on to predict: "Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn." And he pictures them bringing their wealth to Israel: "The sons of your oppressors will come bowing before you; all who despise you will bow down at your feet and will call you the City of the Lord, Zion of the Holy One of Israel."

The episode of the flight to Egypt is depicted by many artists, for it is supercharged with significance. Precisely what is hard to say. Just as Jacob and his sons had to leave the promised land to find food in Egypt, so Jesus and his family flee to Egypt. Matthew adds: "And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son." But it is as much a reversal as a parallel, for they are not fleeing from Egypt but from Israel. The slaughter of baby boys in Bethlehem and vicinity by Herod recalls a similar slaughter when Israel was in Egypt at the time Moses was born. In a subtle way, Israel is to Jesus what Egypt once was to Israel – an oppressor.

The fact that the Messiah, the King of the Jews, is born to an unexceptional girl in a hick town and not even in a home but in a barn are even more obvious ways in which the normal expectations of the Israelites are overturned. But there is not just discontinuity; there is also continuity, but on a deeper level. This is not simply an arraignment of power and office as such; it is, rather, a redirection to their original, God-ordained purposes, namely, to enable people to freely serve the Lord out of hearts overflowing with love for him and for one another. He brings down the proud and the mighty not because he disdains all forms of power, but because it needs to be redirected, given a new foundation – in an attitude of sacrifice and servanthood.

The inclusion of the Magi from the east and the detour through Egypt gesture at the scenario painted in Isaiah 60, where the cultural capital, all the wisdom, wealth and wonders of the nations, are brought into Israel to glorify the King of kings and Lord of lords. That is not a gesture of renunciation. God in Christ has designs not just on the inner affections of his people but on the trade and commerce that transpires among the nations, on the deliberations and decisions of their rulers and on the visions and artworks of artists and visionary teachers.

Celebrating Christmas properly is a struggle every year again, for it is filled with the tension of the Christmas story, the continuity and profound discontinuity with the institutions of power and lordship that we create to pass along not just earthly wisdom but even the great treasures of the Christian tradition.

As I write this, I'm listening to a CD of

Nativity: etching by Michel Ciry. *During the Renaissance and Reformation, depictions of Mary and Jesus became increasingly more realistic. This is a 20th century portrayal which strives for simplicity rather than realism.*

Christmas carols from Germany. Not just the composers but also the singers employed all the mastery and power they could muster to create a piece of music that resonates in the very chambers of my heart. I ache with the longing to sing like that. Yet, I know that this choir of highly skilled singers may be doing it for reasons that have little or nothing to do with glorifying God. It is so very easy to turn the wonderful capacities that God has created in us as his image bearers to self-aggrandizement. And even those of us who serve in so-called "kingdom" causes are not immune to the misuse of power and position.

The deep drama of Christmas with its tension between the way of humiliation and the way of exaltation is nothing less than the struggle at the basis of our daily work. Among other things, the Gospels enact how God redeems and renews the powers he has implanted within his creation so that they may be used to glorify him and to establish an order of peace for all peoples so that they may rejoice in the Lord with every fibre of their heart, soul, mind and body.

Meat Still-Life, by Pieter Aertsen, 1551. *At first glance, Aertsen's still-life of a bounty of food has little or nothing to do with Christ's coming. The tiny figures in the background, however, show Mary, Joseph and Jesus fleeing to Egypt. The painting is a complaint about our lack of spirituality and our worldly appetite.*

"Glory to the newborn king!"

Harry der Nederlanden

Jan van Eyck

If what appears in the art books is a true indication, for several hundred years before the advent of modernity the favorite subject for painters was Mary and the baby Jesus, or, as it's usually called, Madonna and child. Of course, in those days paintings were often commissioned, and the customer often told the painter more or less what he wanted. Paintings frequently served as aids to devotion, and since Mary figured prominently in popular devotion before the Reformation and even after in Catholic circles, it is hardly surprising that she looms so large in the history of Christian art, or perhaps I should say, in the history of art with Christian subject matter.

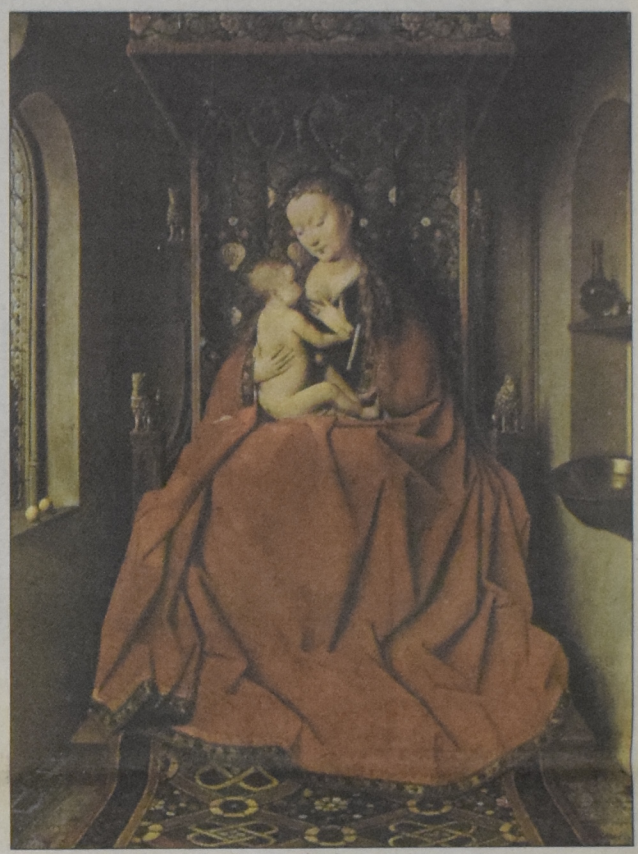
I'm oversimplifying terribly, but for most of the period of history we call the Middle Ages, the Christian subject matter was obvious. Paintings teemed with angels, cute little chubby ones, or slender ones pretty as maidens, or sometimes like athletic young men. The heads of Mary and Jesus were invariably surrounded by golden halos as were the heads of angels and saints. The religious symbolism of the figures was much more important than any resemblance to real persons.

There are dangers lurking in the ways we seek to re-present Jesus Christ, but we cannot avoid the calling to make him present anew in every age. His incarnation demands it.

Jesus doesn't begin to look like a cuddly baby until the latter part of the Middle Ages. Before that Mary looks as if she is holding a small-scale version of the mature Christ. He is often posed the same way as in the paintings and sculptures of him reigning in heaven, his hand extended in blessing.

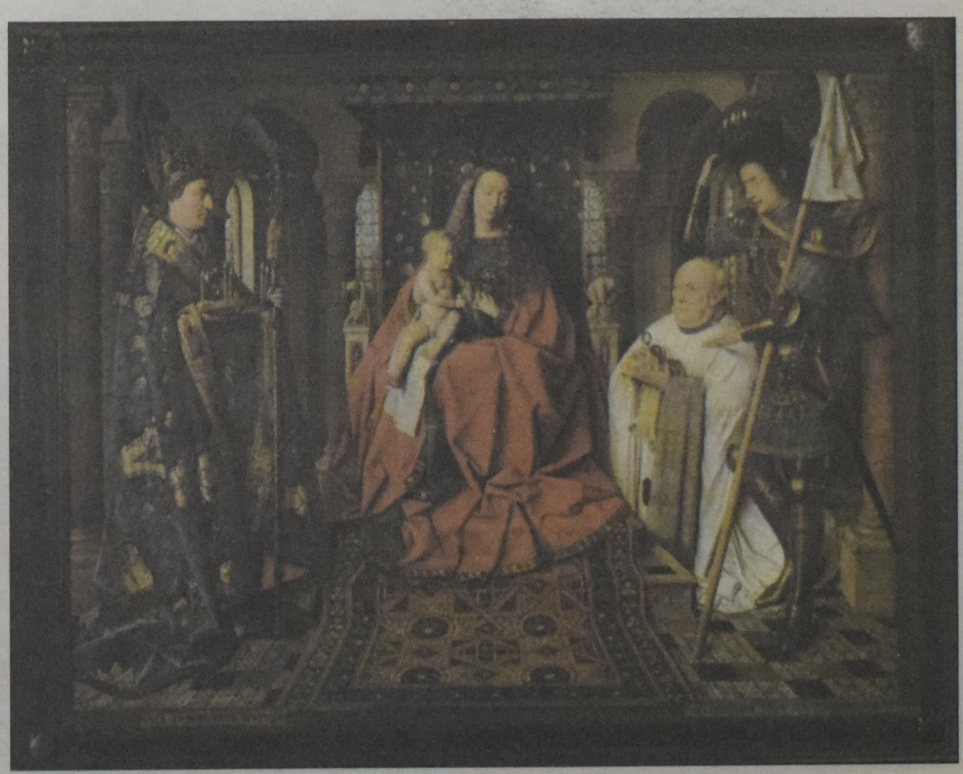
Although there are many depictions of Mary and Jesus in the stable, in many more instances they are lifted out of their historical context. Sometimes Madonna and child seem to be floating in a shimmering golden heaven carried about on an elaborately carved throne by gorgeous angels. Sometimes, too, she sits on a raised throne with a canopy over it (See next page). The intent of the paintings is not to evoke for us the historical setting and event of Jesus' birth in a stable in Bethlehem, but to elicit adoration for Mary, the mother of God, and for Jesus Christ who became incarnate to become our Mediator and King. The mystical and the theological purposes far outweigh any will to realism.

We tend to respond more to pictures that portray Mary as a humble, ordinary Jewish girl in shabby surroundings, for this seems to us to be the thrust of the biblical account. The actual setting



The Lucca Madonna, *by Jan van Eyck.*

Madonna in a Church, *by Jan van Eyck.*



The Madonna with Canon Joris van der Paele, St. Donatian and St. George, *by Jan van Eyck, 1436.*

of the birth is symbolical enough for us.

In two of the pictures of Mary and Jesus painted by Jan van Eyck in the middle of the 15th century and reproduced here, she is sitting on a lavishly ornate throne dressed in the robes of a queen. She is no longer just a symbolic icon; she is beginning to take on the features of a real person, a mother, but there is little about her that is Jewish or lower class. She is still more Queen of Heaven than an ordinary Jewish girl from Nazareth.

In the panel to the lower left on page 16, Mary stands in the middle of a Medieval cathedral as Queen of Heaven. She is much larger than life-size and wears a glittering crown. The church, quite clearly, is her proper domain; she defines it with her chaste piety.

The Lucca Madonna is, for me, a startling portrait. Mary is very maternal here, breast-feeding her baby. But she is sitting in a tiny room, an alcove just big enough for her elaborate throne. Her robes nearly touch the walls on either side. I may be wrong, but the intimacy of this piece is in part because Mary is becoming here a personal saint serving a pious but rich man, the Duke of Lucca. She is almost turned into his private property.

There are dangers lurking in the ways we seek to re-present Jesus Christ, but we cannot avoid the calling to make him present anew in every age. His incarnation demands it.

Raphael

Some of the Medieval nativity scenes try to include all sorts of persons and become crowd scenes: the threesome are joined not only by the shepherds and wise men or kings, but by a variety of animals, by the kings' entourage, by angels above below and behind, by popes, bishops and princes and sometimes by the painter's patron and the painter himself. As Mary was promoted to a more elevated status, the barn, shepherds and wise men dropped away and she occupied a timeless realm, where her throne is surrounded by various saints, prophets and other VIPs.

One of Raphael's early paintings still retains much of this Medieval tradition. Although the faces of the women (Mary and Saints Catharine and Margaret) look almost identical, those of St. Paul and St. Peter have developed into unique human faces. And in the background, the world is becoming visible.

Compare Van Eyck's painting done for the churchman Joris van der Paele, which exhibits a similar structure. Raphael's painting puts Mary in the presence of the two saints who will do most to extend the New Testament church, while Catharine and Margaret appear almost like her ladies in waiting; Van Eyck's, because of the prominent place of the churchman kneeling beside Mary's throne, is a little like calling on Queen Elizabeth to grace the opening of a public building. The painting was done to commemorate (and sanctify?) the founding of two chaplaincies by Van der Paele. He is joined by St. George, the dragon-slayer, and on the other side by St. Donatian, whose virtues are no doubt meant to reflect on Van der Paele as well. This strikes me as a little more presumptuous than painting oneself among those worshiping the newborn king in the manger.

Raphael's The Madonna and Child Enthroned with Five Saints, c. 1505.

The next painting also by Raphael has divested itself of most of the symbolic elements, except for the remnant of cherubs loafing in the clouds. The figures are sitting in a landscape that is becoming increasingly realistic, as if it, too, is becoming more involved in the incarnation. More is invested in the way the group of figures are positioned relative to one another, rather than in external symbolism. It is, however, less a reflection on salvation history than a dynamic family portrait with allusions to youth and innocence contrasted to old age. An aging Elizabeth looks up at an aging Joseph, as she holds John the Baptist. Perhaps we may read from it a meditation on the new and pure thing that comes into time with the birth of Jesus Christ.

In some ways, however, the meaning of redemption seems to have become narrowed down in the process. In the older iconic pictures, Jesus looked out into the world and blessed all who looked at it. Here all the interaction is among the small group of characters. We are mere onlookers.

The tondo, or circular painting, of Madonna and child creates a mother and child with truly human personalities. Although she may be a touch too beautiful, this could be a painting of an actual mother and child. They occupy almost the entire canvas.

Raphael's *The Madonna of the Chair, 1514-15.*

Only John the Baptist remains of the old symbolism. Mary is no longer sitting on a throne but on a chair, and she no longer wears the robes of a queen, but the fancy shawl of a lady.

There is something healthy, world and life affirming in this movement toward greater realism, but some of the former scope is lost. Are we left here simply with the love between a mother and child? This can itself serve as a symbol of the deep, intimate love God showed us by sending his Son to become part of our flesh and part of our suffering. Is that the reason for the solemnity in the Madonna's gaze?

Raphael's *The Holy Family with Saints Elizabeth and John, c. 1506.*

Christmas

Of Christmas past: *Night Patrol, Christmas Eve*

Ralph L. De Groot

It had started to snow a little over two hours ago before it got dark. He doubted that the plows would be dispatched tonight. After all, it was Christmas Eve. Perhaps one of the Truro crews would do the Colchester County stretch of Highway 2 to Halifax. If so, then at least the possibility of accidents in his patrol area would be reduced.

To be on Night Patrol for two weeks on a stretch without a day off was mostly routine and quite often somewhat boring. But even as a junior constable with three years service, boredom and routine had suddenly been injected on several occasions with moments of sheer terror. Usually when least expected.

By some intuition, he knew something was wrong. Sixth sense, they called it, but he had never been able to define it precisely.

HARRY DER NEDERLANDEN ILLUSTRATIONS (2)

He had done well, though. At least, that's what the sergeant had told him and he wasn't known for handing out compliments.

They had never mentioned some of these strange traditions during training at the RCMP Academy in Regina: the junior single man living in detachment barracks did the Night Patrol over the Christmas and New Year's holiday season. And he was the junior, single and living in barracks, together with four other single but senior colleagues. It was rumored that a new junior man would be posted here early in the new year. He hoped it was true.

He would still have to stay single until he had five years service. Then he would be allowed to get married. That is, if you had $1,200 in the bank. You had to prove that. You were required to submit the names of your proposed wife and her family for approval by the Force, as well. It was a lot of money to save when your yearly salary was $2,760.

But he was well on his way. Buying that little 30-acre farm near Onslow had been a good move. The bank had given him a demand loan for the total purchase price. He had quickly sold four lots, each bringing in more than he had paid for the whole thing. As an added bonus, he had sold the creek running through it to the adjoining farmer. He loved this freedom.

It was quite a change from what had been normal: he had always been used to giving all of his wages to his parents before joining the Force, receiving an allowance in return. That had continued even during training until graduation, to which his parents had traveled all the way from Ontario.

What an event that had been. He had been chosen by the drill staff as Right Marker and had led the Pass-Out Parade, as he had the Ride Pass-Out in Equitation on Grace, his beautiful mare. The latter was due more to the amazing abilities of his horse than to his own riding skills, even though he had felt really good about his performance and had loved the six months on horseback. His Drill Sergeant, "Baldy" Stevens, had asked his parents if there were any more like him at home and, if so, to send them to him.

He could tell that dad had been very proud with that implied compliment. So was he. Later that day, his father had taken him aside and told him that from now on it would no longer be necessary to send his money home. He should manage it well himself and not forget the church.

Regina had been a very tough, often painful, but nevertheless positive experience. The things he had learned; it still amazed him. Church-wise as well. The people of the Regina Christian Reformed Church had welcomed both him and Jake with open arms. On those Sundays they were off duty, there was always an invite to come home with a family for a real home-cooked meal. Usually a farming family with daughters, which made it all the better. But the city folks, too, had been marvelous. It made the Force-required church attendance the easier for it, although he had not liked the Church Parades for that purpose, because Jake and he were the only two Christian Reformed attendees on parade with some 300 other recruits and therefore the last to be dismissed to go to church.

The Church Parade was dismissed according to the size of the religious grouping you stood with on parade. Sergeant Major Primrose would shout them out: "Presbyterians, diii-smissed!" "Anglicans, diii-smissed!" "Roman Catholics, diii-smissed!" And finally he would get to the two of them: "Christian Reform, diii-smissed." The sergeant Major had never gotten the "Reformed" bit quite right. All recruits had to have a religious affiliation. There appeared to be no atheists or agnostics at the academy.

Come to think of it, there really were some nice people in the church. You didn't think of that too often. He'd had the same thought during that long train ride from Toronto to Regina, when he had left home in December of 1957. Present for his departure from Union Station had been a good number of people from the Taunton Road Church, apart from his family. Amongst them had been Mr. John Masselink, a friend of his father. Masselink had taken him aside and told him they were all proud of him going into the RCMP, that he should do his very best, set an example, and not to forget his "spiritual and national roots." That same man had regularly sent him letters of encouragement throughout training. Quite something, when you thought about it.

There had been a bit of a down side to that circumstance, though. Often he had felt the added pressure that somehow he had to do better than his mates. Much to his surprise, he had: graduating first in his class. Oh well, that was training. He'd certainly like to be home right now.

The Sergeant in charge of his detachment had said that maybe next year he would give him leave to go home to Ontario during the holiday season. To actually take some of your vacation entitlements was a privilege, not a right. He knew that. You had to sign your leave application letter by signing it: "I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant...." So far, none of his applications had been approved for Christmas leave. At least the credits in his leave bank kept growing at a steady pace. He hadn't been home for three Christmases since joining the Force in 1957.

One thing was certain: you had a lot of time to think while on patrol in the warm cruiser, but this wasn't really a good time to think of home. Better concentrate on the road. Traffic was very light — a small blessing. Why was it that days could go by without concentrating so much on home? Then you get to Christmas and all you can think of is home.

The one good thing about Night Patrol was that you felt a sense of self-worth. You were all alone. You made your own decisions. Three counties in your care. Twelve assorted villages and hamlets and you the only peace officer on duty. Quite something, when you came to think of it.

The dispatcher at Truro Detachment would be off duty now. No more radio link. Emergencies would come to you from the Halifax dispatcher, some 60 miles away, and that's who you would call for back-up if required.

You seldom called for back-up, of course. There was this unspoken expectation that you should be able to handle everything by yourself. After all, you were a Mountie. Better change the frequency, so that Halifax can make contact.

Let's see now: it was a little after seven. That would make it six in Toronto. His parents would be ready to go to church. The family would all meet there and then troop on home. That's what he missed most: the unchanging routine of Christmas Eve.

When they got home, there would be all kinds of good stuff to eat and something strong to drink: Mazeltov for the ladies and whisky with ginger ale for the men. The gifts would be opened with each hand-written poem having to be read first, of course. Even the parcel he had mailed home two weeks ago with one gift for each included the poems. It had taken him days on end to write them. Most of his colleagues did that with cards. Then tomorrow, on Christmas morning, they'd all go back to Taunton Road Church again. Strange really, no one ever seemed to call it the First Christian Reformed Church of Toronto.

Dog-gone it, he had stop this sentimentality and concentrate on what he was doing. He might miss something. He would turn off the highway at Brookfield, take the gravel roads to Newton Mills and Upper Musquodoboit, then work his way back to Wentworth, Folley Mountain and Westchester Station via Earltown and do Londonderry on the way to Economy via Bass River. Then run a required patrol on the main Halifax highway to Enfield before returning to barracks in Truro, breakfast and bed. That should be well over 225 miles of road miles for a scheduled 15 hour patrol. Unless something happened. Then the guidelines didn't apply.

His check-off sheet showed ten safes in general stores to be checked in various villages and hamlets that had no banks. The safes would contain a lot of cash at this time of year. They served more or less as a temporary community depository. He had never even heard of such practices when he was a civilian in Toronto. No one had ever blown, cracked or peeled a safe on his watch and they weren' t going to get the chance tonight.

What else was on his sheet? Oh yes, Mrs. Percy had called the detachment earlier in the day. Would the Night Patrol keep an eye on the farm house when they went by? See that everything looked okay. Grandma Trippet, her mother, would be home alone. He didn't know how old she was, but man, Grandma looked very old. Mrs. Percy and

Christmas

the kids would be away for the evening and not be home until late.

That's what he liked about rural policing: the people contact. They appreciated you. They knew you and you knew them. Well, at least you knew about them.

Mrs. Percy had a fine outside well on her little farm. During the hot days of summer, you always stopped there for a cool drink of water. If she was home, she would insist you have a sandwich or a piece of pie. Mr. Percy worked in the mines in Pennsylvania. That's where he had found work after the Springhill mine disaster in '59.

He himself had been assigned there on temporary duty to respond and assist the two-man Springhill Detachment — Corporal Duff and Constable Green. It was the first time he had worked 72 hours straight without any sleep or change of uniform. The carnage still haunted him on occasion. They said you would get over that, as they did each time they knew you had encountered death or serious injuries. You sure had to get over a lot of things.

Normally, Mr. Percy came home once a month. He wondered if Mr. Percy would be home for Christmas. You would think so. Grandma Trippet was originally from Alaska. That's where Mrs. Percy was born, one of seven children.

Six of them had perished in a terrible house fire in Alaska in the middle of the night when everyone had been asleep. He couldn' t remember the name of the town or when this had happened. Mrs. Percy had been the youngest. Her mother had only been able to save her and had had to be restrained from going back in the burning house for the others. Her father, an Alaskan miner, had not been home at the time. After the fire, the three Trippets had moved all the way to Springhill, Nova Scotia. Mr. Trippet had gotten a job in the mines there, and that was where Mrs. Percy had grown up and met her husband, a local boy, also a miner.

The fellows at the barracks said that Grandma had become unusually quiet after the death of her retired husband a number of years ago. Now she was just very old and almost silent; just sitting in her rocking chair by the window remembering and, more often than not, reading an old big and well-used Bible. He had seen her doing that, reading the old Bible, but that's about all. Grandma would never acknowledge you, not even if you were inside eating your piece of pie or sandwich in the big kitchen, which also served as living room.

Mrs. Percy talked your head off, but he had never heard Grandma say a word. He could not really imagine what that would be like — watching six of your seven children perish in a burning house.

Why did he have to think of this now? For Pete's sake, it was Christmas Eve. If he kept this up, he would really get down in the dumps. He felt lonely enough as it was. The boys and he never talked about being homesick, and yet all of them were from someplace else.

Later on he would stop by the pay phone at the service station in Folley Lake and call home. The station would be closed, but it had an outside phone booth. His parents would be expecting the collect call.

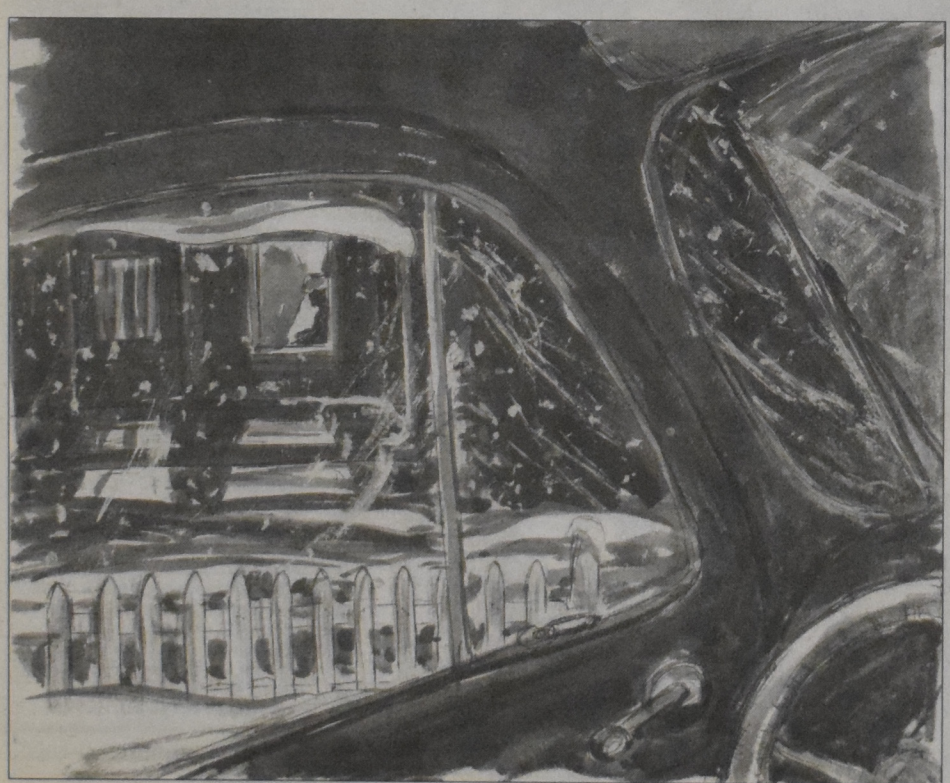
He knew how that would go. Someone would answer, hand the phone to his mother, then dad, then everyone else in turn. He would hear all the chatter of his sister, brother-in-law, nephews, niece and other invited single people from church in the background and even the laughter. Someone would tell him about the size of the turkey for tomorrow. Each of them would thank him for his gift and he them.

Mom would tell him about the wonderful church service they had and ask the usual questions. Was he eating enough? Did he have enough clean underwear? Had he met a nice girl yet? Was he going to church tomorrow? Then at some point, the phone would be held up and at the other end they would together shout "Me-e-e-e-r-r-y Christmas."

He wouldn't tell them anything about the girl. Not yet anyway. Was she ever beautiful! But at 17 much too young. He was friends with her parents. They were from someplace called Bedum in Holland. When he first met them at church, they had been operating the dining room concession at the local golf club, but now they owned a nice restaurant in town. He often ate at both places.

Of all the girls he had dated, this gorgeous creature was the one he wanted to spend the rest of his life with — that he knew. And they would have children, lots of children. Next year, when she was 18, he would ask her to the Annual RCMP Formal Ball. All local girls wanted to attend that event; it was the town's social highlight of the year. In the meantime, he would make sure that the local yokels kept their distance. A word here and there and they would get the message and understand she was spoken for — even though she didn't know about it as yet.

All this was much too hard to explain to your mother. She would ask too many questions and would want to know all manner of details he wasn't prepared to answer yet. You'd think mom didn't know he was 23 years old.



Mothers: what would you do without them? She wrote him a letter each week and he replied maybe once a month. Dad would be his usual calm self on the phone. How was it going? Be careful out there.

One of the nephews would want to know if he'd shot any bad guys yet. You didn't talk about things like that, but they didn't know that; much too young. He had never written home about such things. He doubted that he ever would. There were only two incidents of that kind, and one of them still gave him the chills: waking up in the middle of the night, soaked, reliving the scene over and over again. But they said you would get over it.

He wondered what his best friend Jake was doing right now. They had grown up together in Toronto, chased girls together, joined the Force together and trained together, albeit in separate troops. Jake had been ordered to take an earlier train and had arrived in Regina before him. He had so hoped that Jake and he would be posted to the same province. Jake had gotten Parliament Hill in Ottawa and he got Nova Scotia. No one wanted to go to Parliament Hill. After a while, Jake had switched to the Toronto Police Department. Perhaps he was on patrol as well, be it then on city streets.

At least there were no calls as yet; they loused up your whole patrol plan. The snow now appeared to come at you almost horizontally. Better slow down a little.

The dashboard clock showed a couple of minutes before ten. Time was passing well. So far everything had been routine: very little traffic, no accidents. The safes checked thus far had not been touched.

Earlier, on the gravel road at the foot of Wentworth Mountain, he had come upon swerving tire tracks in the freshly fallen snow. Speeding up slightly, he had recognized the back of Harry Johnson's old and battered pick-up truck, making his way home. Tail lights out and broken, as usual. Everyone liked Harry: good family man, hard working logger, the strength of a bull, hands like coal shovels, big heart, good friend of the police. Harry had one small weakness, shared by quite a few folks in these rural parts: every now and then he would have a few too many. Obviously this was one of the "now and then."

He had pulled Harry over, made certain the pick-up was reasonably well off the road, read him the riot act for his behavior, told him to get his tail lights fixed, and placed him gently in the passenger side of the cruiser, together with assorted packages from Harry's pick-up cab. No one ever put Harry in the back.

He had driven him home nine miles down the road, all the while having to listen to Harry's 101 apologies and promises never to do it again. The fate awaiting him there would be much more effective than the law ever could hope to achieve: Mrs. Johnson. The tiniest woman for miles around. All the fellows knew, as did he, that Emmeline Johnson with her long, curly, flaming red hair personified, in Harry's understanding, the Fear of the Lord. And whatever would happen inside those four walls, would keep Harry on a short chain for several months.

Mrs. Johnson had thanked him, he had wished her and the three kids a Merry Christmas, brought the packages inside and gone on his way. Early in the coming New Year, Harry would show up at the detachment with his pick-up and fixed tail lights; you could count on it. He would take you aside and suggest that you visit a certain location deep in the woods, usually on top of Folley Mountain. You always followed up on any of Harry's suggestions. When you did, you would score another operating still and, if you timed it right, one or two arrests as well.

Moonshine and bootleggers were a real challenge here, and without some friendly

Continued on page 20...

Christmas

Of Christmas past: *Night Patrol, Christmas Eve*

... *continued from page 19*

help, you never got near them. All of this came under the heading of police discretion: exercising it properly served the public better than putting Harry under arrest. Law had been his best subject at the Academy. Who knows, perhaps some day the Force would select him for its sponsored university degree program. Wouldn't that be something! Well, at least he could dream.

It would be a little after nine o'clock in Toronto now. Should he go south to Folley Lake for the phone call or west to the Westchester Station area and check on Grandma? Better first check Mrs. Percy's farm. Possibly a bit too early for the phone call home.

He could tell no car had driven in or out of the rather long driveway. No tire tracks in the snow. Lights were on inside.

As he pulled in, Grandma Trippet's silhouette could just be seen above the neat row of straw bales lining the outside walls just below the sills: seated where she always sat by the window, her rocking chair with its high back on a slight angle. Most of the small farms here used bales to keep the cold drafts out. He'd best go inside and just wish her a Merry Christmas. Mrs. Percy would appreciate that.

The rickety storm door on the side storm porch was not locked. His knock on the main kitchen door was, of course, not answered. Best not startle her. He gently turned the handle and went inside. Just as he'd expected: Grandma was obviously reading and had not heard him come in; yet, by some intuition, he knew something was wrong. Sixth sense, they called it, but he had never been able to define it precisely.

With his fur hat in one hand, he approached her. Then he knew. He had seen it before.

Somehow you recognized death, but without being able to explain it. His heart was pounding slightly. All the operational policy guidelines flashed through his mind.

Grandma Trippet's head was slightly tilted to the side and resting against the high back of her rocking chair, her bifocals precariously nestled on the tip of her nose. He placed his two fingers on the carotid artery on the side of her neck, even though he knew he would find no pulse. He carefully looked, as required, for any obvious outward signs of injury, knowing there weren't any.

It was then that he first really took note of the open, old large-print Bible in her lap, her bony right hand and index finger resting somewhere near the middle of the page, her left hand limply hanging from the chair's arm rest, a handkerchief apparently having fallen on the floor beside her chair. He could see pencil-written notes in the wide margins but upside down, they were indecipherable.

He moved slightly to the side to gain a better view. The pointed finger had come to rest at a particular spot. He could see the rough pencilled underlining. His eyes were drawn first to the particular verses: 3 and 4. Then he noticed the chapter heading: Revelation 21.

It was as if he could not help himself when he began to read:

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

He badly needed a drink of water. The noise of the hand-pump above the sink somehow seemed grotesque, as he moved the arm up and down, filling a blue steel cup. He reminded himself to settle down and mentally checked off things to do: notebook entries, time of discovery, record observations, call the coroner, get the camera from the trunk, take front and side views, what else?

HARRY DER NEDERLANDEN ILLUSTRATION

Picking up the wall phone, he noticed a note pinned to the wall: fl 134 arr 1005. So that was it. He knew that flight. Kelly Lake Airport was very much underused, so most members knew all flights by heart. This was the late night flight arriving from Boston, originating in Pittsburgh. So that's where Mrs. Percy and the kids had gone, to pick up Mr. Percy coming home for Christmas.

He decided to sit down for a bit. It would be a long wait. After listening to his verbal report, Dr. Casey, the coroner, had said he would dispatch a Kennedy's Funeral Home driver from Truro. Dr. Casey would examine the remains tomorrow.

He, and the driver if necessary, were to wait before actual removal until the Percies got home. He was to formally explain the circumstances and the coroner's ruling to the Percy family.

He had already notified the Halifax dispatcher of his location and the reason for being out of service, as well as the phone number where he could be reached. All he could do now was to sit and think.

He would try not to look at Grandma too much. When they arrived, he would intercept the Percies in the driveway and inform them outside. Hopefully the Kennedy driver would arrive first and give him some moral support.

Though there was a phone handy, he was not going to call home. How would he explain himself — where he was, what he was doing? It would have to wait until tomorrow.

He felt somewhat drained. His thoughts were racing: Grandma, the fire, her life-long pain, and now all these former things had passed away, for her at least. They said you would get over these emotional encounters. He certainly hoped so.

Home and Christmas Eve now seemed a world away. Yet, somehow there was this undefined inner nagging that all of this had to mean something. He couldn't quite put his finger on it, but it was there: Christmas Eve, Grandma's sudden death, the open Bible in her lap with its poetic passage, and the celebration tomorrow of Jesus' birth.

Was that it? Jesus born to cancel out not only Grandma's past, pain and sorrow, but ours as well?

Some of the fellows would laugh if they knew what he was thinking. You didn't talk much about things like that. Few police officers wore their religious views or questions on their sleeve. Maybe he would figure it out some day.

It was well after midnight when his pondering was interrupted by the sweep of headlights briefly lighting up the kitchen ceiling.

RCMP Superintendent DeGroot (Rtd) resides in Peterborough. He found that the beautiful and gorgeous creature was willing to marry him. The Lord blessed them with four children. Dreams do come true: the Force sponsored both his undergraduate and graduate degrees. This year, the De Groots celebrated their 40th Wedding Anniversary.

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Christmas

Christmas Eve at Pier 21

Ron de Boer

I'll admit I wanted to go home in the worst way that night. We had the two little ones, you see, and, well, Christmas Eve was a special time in our house. Elly used to bake these ginger cookies in the shapes of Christmas trees and reindeer and such, and the little ones would stand on kitchen chairs by the counter licking out everything they could get their hands on.

We put on the Christmas Carols, too — *Silent Night* and *O Come All Ye Faithful* and all them. I'd be home from my job at the harbour front and sitting in my chair by suppertime; you didn't get the day off or drink your afternoon away at the office in those days. I'd be sitting in my chair watching the three of them at the counter, listening to the Christmas Carols while the snow fell gently outside the window and the candles — Elly had this thing with candles — all glowing soft-like. I'm telling you, it was plain heaven in our house on Christmas Eve.

I was Zachaeus the tax collector, Saul before Damascus and that criminal on the cross beside Jesus all rolled into one, I guess.

'Course, the harbour front and Pier 21 never really left your mind, Christmas or not. You learned early in the job you could sit for days thumbin' your twiddles, if you know what I mean, and then suddenly be working an entire shift without even remembering you needed to use the toilet four hours ago. They'd come off the boat with their trunks and half dozen or so kids and funny smells, and we had to make sure all the i's were crossed and t's dotted — if you know what I mean — before stamping '**LANDED IMMIGRANT**' on their papers and getting them on the trains to Toronto and only God knows where else.

So even on Christmas Eve there was always the possibility a ship might come in. You're not going to see an Aquitania or a Queen Mary stopping mid-Atlantic just because some Canadian immigration officer wanted to be home with his family baking cookies and listening to the Binger sing White Christmas. No, they'd be following the star right into Halifax, if you know what I mean.

★★★★★

We were sitting on these wooden benches around mid-afternoon that Christmas Eve, listening to a crackly rendition of the Rudolph song on the radio when the boss comes in, turns down the radio and tells us the Samaria was due in a few hours. It was coming in from Paris. Hundreds of Dutchmen and their families would be spending Christmas Eve standing in lines, sleeping on suitcases, and answering every single question we threw their way: *How much money are you bringing over? Who's your sponsor? Are there any medical concerns?*

HARRY DER NEDERLANDEN ILLUSTRATION

When you looked out into the blackness that was Halifax Harbour and saw the winds and gales blowing snow across the icy waters, you wouldn't have believed anything was coming in that night. But there was no stopping a passenger ship. Today, the airports would be shut down, the plane would be re-routed and the immigrants would get to spend Christmas Eve in some South Carolina hotel resort. Back then, most of the folks on the Samaria would be crammed into third-class quarters, sick as dogs, most of them, biding their time away for eight, nine days in their bunk beds, praying for fresh air and solid ground beneath their feet. Add to that how scared they were coming to a country half frozen under snow. You could see fear and uncertainty in their faces.

Now, back then I didn't believe in no God almighty, that's for sure. You've probably heard the sailors could curse you up one side and down the other. Let me tell you, the sailors came to me for blue words. I could tell you stories about wine and women that would keep you up into the wee hours imagining things. And some of the ways I treated those folks coming in off the ships weren't too holy, either. I'm not proud of it today, but I've taken my share of secret envelopes from well-to-do foreigners anxious to get into our home and native land, let me tell you.

Now, Elly, she made sure the little ones got to church and I obliged to say grace before meal times, but I didn't put much thought into any of it. 'Wayward' is what I guess you'd call me. I was Zachaeus the tax collector, Saul before Damascus and that criminal on the cross beside Jesus all rolled into one, I guess. Elly stayed fast to the Good Word and said she was praying for my soul, but I was so busy with the immigration work in those days I didn't really think about any of that "Our Father Who Art in Heaven" business.

That is until that night.

★★★★★

It started off pretty normal. The volunteers from the Red Cross came in like they always did in their crisp white uniforms and smiles. That night they had little bags for the kids with red and green ribbons and hampers of food for the long trip on the trains. Armies of Dutch people from the local church came in to help their fellow countrymen ease into Canadian life, too. You could hear them arguing with each other long before they got to the waiting area.

Take that first family who came into immigration after the medical. Eight children all lined up from oldest to youngest like they were posing for a picture. You could see nine days of Atlantic Ocean in their tired eyes. It wasn't until the mother put down the little one that I noticed she was pregnant. I should've seen that as a sign, but I was too busy counting heads and pointing to the papers the Dutchman had flattened out onto the desk.

Then he did something I'd never seen before. He turned to me and held up a finger as if to tell me to hang on a minute. Now, no immigration man wants to be told to hang on, but before I could say such, the man dropped to his knees and every single member of that family made a circle around him. They hung their heads and, one by one, said something I couldn't understand, but you could see they were praying. It sort of paralysed me, and I don't know if it was the wine the loading guys sneaked in earlier or the Christmas carols making me wish I was with my own family, but I felt something warm in my belly right then.

'Course it was gone as soon as the Dutchman stood up and began answering my questions. It was a routine case, a rubber stamper, if you know what I mean. The Dutch always had their i's crossed and t's dotted, you know.

★★★★★

It was right about then that the soldier knocked on the top of my desk. He was a Canadian fellow — all clean cut and smart looking. We used to get a lot of them over here during the war when Pier 21 was taken over by the Department of Defence. By the band on his arm I knew he was a medic during the war. I also knew before he asked why he was there. He was looking for his war bride. A lot of the young fellas from dubya dubya two came in to Pier 21 to pick up the girls they married overseas. They had that same scared look on their faces as the immigrants coming in off the ships.

"Has Janneke DeVries come through yet?" he said. I can still see that blonde crew cut and those blue eyes, pleading me to tell him she was sitting right over by that nun waiting for him. He kept looking around like he was either in a big hurry or in big trouble. If I was in the business of looking for signs, I should've seen a sign there, too. That young soldier never went to Hal, Frank, Andy or any of the other immigration guys, but stood there like someone waiting for a taxi in a ghost town. It was strange, like he was in a big hurry and had all the time in the world to wait, too. Each time I finished, there he was, asking for Janneke DeVries.

It got so I kept my eye on him the whole while I was doing the Bos family, the Kamminga clan, all the way to the Zylstras. And every time I stood up to shake hands with the new Canadian family, that soldier would appear beside my desk, ring the little bell — even though I was right there — and say, "Has Janneke DeVries come through yet?" When I would shake my head, he would go back to his place against the wall and scan the mobs of families pulling trunks and carrying suitcases.

★★★★★

When things simmered down a bit and the waiting area thinned out, I noticed we were on the other side of midnight; it was Christmas morning. I thought about Elly and the little ones again, asleep at home, and I got that warm feeling in my belly again. Some of the nuns were praying quietly with several of the families. They were singing hymns, too, and if you closed your eyes, they could have been angels fluttered down from heaven they sounded so sweet at that hour.

It was right then that I heard the woman's screams. I opened my eyes to see a man coming from the ship into immigration waving his arms and yelling words I didn't understand. Behind him was a woman clutching her swollen belly. She had a sick look on her face that said that baby was coming out now.

Two of the nuns and several of the Red Cross people rushed over to her before she could collapse to the floor. Hal and me made sure everyone else got out of there. If this woman was having a child on our floor, nobody who wasn't family was going to watch, you could be sure of that.

For the next several minutes there was a lot of screaming and breathing. I'll never forget it. The whole of Pier 21 seemed to stop everything it was doing. It looked just like a picture you see of that place today — people

Continued on page 22...

Christmas

Christmas Eve at Pier 21

HARRY DER NEDERLANDEN ILLUSTRATION

... continued from page 21

just standing and waiting, frozen in time.

The woman let another scream, a long one — I'll never forget it. It was like a death wail. And then she stopped.

There was a silence right then. A big loud silence, and I looked over my shoulder to see that woman pick up her baby and hug it like somebody was going to take it away from her. Even in the dim lighting of Pier 21, you could see that baby was lifeless and grey. Something stabbed through my gut right then. One of the Red Cross people was kneeling beside her, talking to her, and as I remember it now, everything seemed to be unfolding at half speed.

That's when that soldier came pushing his way through the crowd.

When I thought about it later, he never hesitated. It was like he'd been waiting all day for that woman's arrival. And that look of nervousness had completely left his face. He put his hand on that Red Cross worker's shoulder then kneeled down over that woman.

Now, I don't know if I missed something or if my memory fails me, but that baby started to scream just a minute or two later. Everyone looked at that soldier boy like he was Jesus or something and started to clap — like the whole thing was a scene out of church theatre. That's when I got that shivery feeling all over like God was shaking sense into me.

When we got the whole place mopped up and everyone sent home, I went over to Hal, who processed the young man whose wife had just given birth to Canada's newest citizen. Hal, I say, what was the name of that woman who tonight became a mother?

You know what Hal says to me? He says, *Janneke DeVries*. I must have stared at him like he was a ghost, but he right returned my stare when I asked him who that young soldier was who brought that baby back to life. Hal told me he to quit fooling with him, he was busy, and wanted to go home. When he looked up and saw I wasn't foolin' he said I should go home to Elly and get some sleep before I walked off the dock into Halifax Harbour.

★★★★★

Now I don't know if you believe in miracles, but as I sit here today in the dining area of this old nursing home waiting for the grandkids to take me to their house for Christmas Eve, I'm telling you as God is my witness that that soldier wasn't at Pier 21 looking for his war bride. That clean-shaved soldier with the crew cut hair was an angel sent by God Almighty to save that little boy, whose father, James DeVries, and mother, Janneke DeVries, arrived December 24, 1947 in Halifax, Nova Scotia. It's all there on the front page of today's *Times*. Their son, Dr. James DeVries, born on Christmas Day, 1947, grew up to study medicine at McGill University and three days ago received the Nobel Prize for his work in cancer research. You want to know the real kicker? They think he's saved millions of people with his work. Look for yourself. Here's his picture and everything.

Maybe it would be considered by some to be blasphemous, but I do believe I witnessed a Divine birth that Christmas Eve fifty-five years ago. You're the first person besides my Elly I've ever told this story to, and if for some reason I don't make it back, you have my permission to tell it off the pulpit in one of your sermons, if you like. Folks is always telling me there ain't been no miracles since the days of Jesus, but as I'm a living breathing soul, it was a miracle I witnessed that Christmas.

It was a God-almighty-miracle when Jesus up and walked right in and breathed life into that Christmas child. Breathed life into me.

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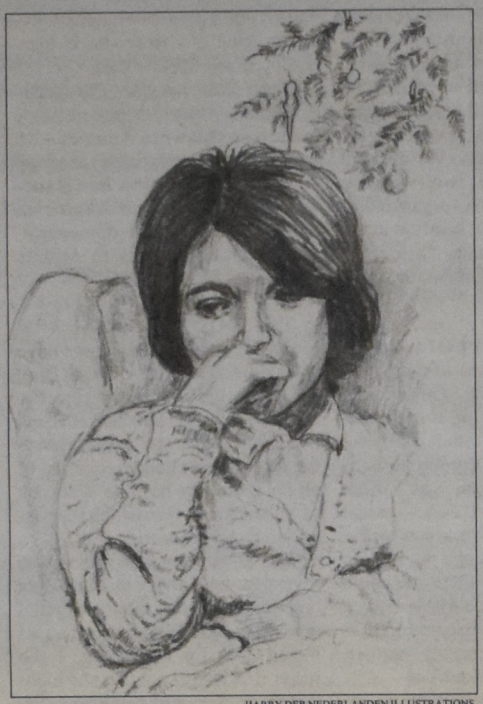
Christmas

Quitting times

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema



HARRY DER NEDERLANDEN ILLUSTRATIONS

"I'm quitting," Natalie said dejectedly.

"You can't be serious!" my wife chided. "You can't leave college after two-and-a-half years!"

"Mom!" Natalie groaned.

Alice means well, but when our four kids' lives don't run smoothly she becomes agitated.

"Is something wrong?" I asked quietly.

Natalie pulled her knees up on the chair and rested her chin on them. Through the kitchen window behind her, snow swirled past the street light.

"It's complicated, Dad," Natalie sighed.

But I needed to wake up my child. And share a story with her.

Alice shifted restlessly in her chair. By her determined look, I knew she was ready to deploy a barrage of solutions. You don't live with a woman for 25 years and not know how she tackles emergencies. When crises struck, it was as if she were making a pan of soup: mixing the onions of choices, the carrots of decisions, and the celery of wisdom, then cooking it and serving a delicious broth, a healthy remedy for anyone who eagerly slurped it up. But often our kids didn't want her concoction.

"So, what's wrong?" Alice demanded. "Is it your roommate? Finances? Is the course load too heavy? Because if it is, I could talk to the guidance counselor for you. What I mean to say is, never say 'die'!"

"Do you want to talk about it?" I coaxed Natalie.

"I can't do it anymore," she agonized. "Before the end of the semester, the reading and term papers piled up. I worked 25 hours a week stocking shelves at the grocery store. Exams almost killed me. And ...."

"Of course you're busy," Alice interrupted. "What did you expect? This is college, not high school. If you schedule your time efficiently, get rest, and eat a healthy diet, it wouldn't be a problem."

"What else, Natalie?" I asked. "Is there something else causing you stress?"

"There is," Natalie retorted, as she glared at Alice. "But I don't want to talk about it right now!"

The moods of my children always affected me. When they were despondent or negative, joy seemed to seep away through the cracks in the floor and the drafty windows of our old home. Even though Alice's burlap banner on the kitchen wall announced "Merry Christmas" in green and red felt letters, and the furnace hummed cosily while the world froze solid outside, the happiness I'd felt at midnight when Natalie arrived home escaped me as she stomped out of the kitchen.

That night I lay awake while Alice whiffled softly beside me. For someone who claims she doesn't snore, Alice was maintaining a fine rhythm. She astonished me because, though she drove the kids mad trying to straighten out their lives, she never lost sleep worrying about them. Her motto made sense in a strange, convoluted way. She felt there were enough daytime hours to worry, so why waste precious sleeping hours fretting.

But I couldn't make her principle my own.

Laying there, I remembered when Natalie occasionally injured herself as a child. She had then cried, crawled on my lap, stuck her thumb in her mouth, and bawled, "Ith hurth!" I stroked her fine, shiny hair, wiped her wet eyes, and helped her blow her nose. Soon her thumb popped out of her mouth, and she said, "It's better!"

But that was then, I thought, and this is now.

I got out of bed and reached for the white enameled candleholder on my bookshelf. It was like the one Wee Willie Winkie, the nursery rhyme character, held when he ran through town telling all the children it was time for bed.

But I needed to wake up my child. And share a story with her.

A thread of light seeped beneath Natalie's bedroom door. I knocked softly, not wanting to wake her three younger brothers who slept in adjacent rooms. Natalie opened the door.

"What do you want, Dad?"

"Can we talk?"

In the living room I plugged in the Christmas tree lights. Natalie sat on the couch in the semi-darkness opposite me.

"I couldn't sleep," I explained, "thinking about you. When you hurt, I hurt."

"Thanks, Dad." Natalie paused, then pointed at the candle-holder in my hand. "What's that for?"

"Could I tell you a story?" I asked in answer to her question.

"Of course."

"When I was 20, I almost quit college, too. I was going out with a girl for three years. Stephanie. I guess you could say I loved her."

Natalie watched me intently. The red, blue, orange, and yellow tree lights speckled her white sweatshirt, embossed with her college's name.

"My parents lived in London, Ontario then — the Snow Belt, it's called. Two days before Christmas a storm ripped through there. I was already home for the holidays and Stephanie was coming to my parents' place, too. But she never arrived. We called the police, but there was no report of an accident involving her car. All night I worried as the snow piled up, the wind howled, and temperatures plunged dangerously."

I paused, fingering the scalloped edges of the candleholder and the rough, rusty spot by the handle where the enamel had worn away.

"By morning the storm ended, but the city was deadlocked. My dad and I set out walking. The snow reached up to our thighs. We lumbered along for hours, checking stranded cars. On Commissioner's Road, three girls were peering into a car as we approached. One suddenly ran to a nearby house. Then I saw the car's cracked back window and knew it was Stephanie's. I pushed past the girls and saw Stephanie slumped against the door. She had died from the cold within metres of a house because she couldn't see the lights through the blowing snow."

"Oh, Dad!" Natalie whispered. "That's horrible!"

"It was. I couldn't get over the irony that she died so close to a place where she could have found shelter. The light was there, but she couldn't see it."

I set the candle- holder down on the coffee table. Natalie leaned forward and picked it up, cradling it in her palms.

"I went back to college, but only lasted a week," I continued. "I couldn't concentrate, so I called my parents that I was quitting and coming home. When I arrived at about three in the morning, this candle-hold- er, with a lit candle in it, stood on my bedside table. It belonged to my dad's father, my grandfather in the Netherlands. He used it to light his way to bed. There was a note from my dad laying beside it."

"What did Grandpa write?"

"He said the candle-holder was mine to keep. And though that was a special gift, it's his words I'll always remember. He wrote, 'Even the Light of the World wanted to quit once.'"

"In the Garden of Gethsemane," Natalie added.

"That's the place," I agreed. "It wasn't an easy road for Jesus from the manger to the cross. He even asked God that the cup of suffering be taken from him. Because he was God and man, he understands how tough life is. And he knows what you're going through."

"That doesn't make it easy just like that," Natalie said, as she snapped her fingers.

"I know," I answered. "I never said it would. But Christ's light will see you through." I went to the kitchen and took matches from the closet. In the living room I handed them to Natalie. She lit the candle.

"I'd like you to have the candle-holder," I offered.

"Thanks," she whispered. The flickering light was reflected in her eyes. She looked at me seriously. "I don't know what I'll decide, Dad. Maybe I'll go back. Maybe I won't."

I went to Natalie and put my arm around her shoulder. My child. A young woman now. And I remembered my trembling knees the first time I held her as a newborn. So fragile then. Vulnerable still. And I vulnerable, too, as I journeyed with her.

Later, I crawled back into bed and kissed Alice lightly on her forehead. Exhausted, I flopped on my pillow and prayed: Light of the World, thank you that you didn't quit. Too tired to worry any more, I slept.

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News Comment

Nose for News

Bert Hielema

I LEFT HOLLAND 51 years ago. When I look at the dark sky, the ever-threatening rain, the continuous dampness, then I recall that one of the main reasons I left the Netherlands was the weather. Mind you, we did have two days of weak sunshine. So I count my blessings.

A few weeks ago I returned to the Netherlands, my country of birth and I felt at a loss. I had no newspapers to scan, no access to TV, no radio that informed me what goes on in the world. Well, I exaggerate a bit, of course. But the news was mostly local, which is not all that important to me.

Still, Holland is as advanced as any country. Even more so. Take traffic. Each morning the stoppages are reported on the radio. It used to be that they only occurred in the West, where the really big cities are. Now they are everywhere, but most of them occur in the triangle of the three hubs: Rotterdam, the Hague and Amsterdam, where the bulk of the people live. In between these three cities every square inch is built up as well, because in that little area the majority of the 16 million live, so close together that you never see open space. Well, again I exaggerate a bit, of course.

Each morning my host would tell how many different "files" (the Dutch word for bumper-to-bumper traffic) there were, often as many as 50, with a total length of some 300 km. I noticed that on the major highways overhead flashing signs signal the traffic flow. Fortunately, by choosing the right times to venture on the freeways, I could drive relatively "file" free. Once they have a clear road, Dutch drivers go berserk and drive like maniacs to make up for lost time. Several times, when I had the audacity to linger at a stop light for more than one necessary second, horns would blare. Apparently time in Holland is too precious to waste being cautious and deliberate. Well, again I exaggerate a bit, of course.

I CAME HERE, WITH MY wife and also our daughter from Los Angeles (the middle of three) and her nine-month-old darling little girl — the most beautiful and adorable child in the world, in my totally unbiased opinion (this time I am not exaggerating) — to help us celebrate my brother's 40th wedding anniversary and our 50th. We are not quite there yet, but what is a couple of months over 50 years.

We have lots of relatives here, both my wife's and mine. At one time we had 40 brothers and sisters here, including their spouses. Now the numbers are less. We decided to combine these two wedding events. My brother organized a dinner in a beautiful location in the centre of this country in a postcard-like setting. Giethoorn of all places!

THE DUTCH PEOPLE ARE something else. Some of them anyway. Take Gretta Duisenberg, whose husband, Wim, is the president of the ECB (the European Central Bank). In Europe he is as influential a man as Alan Greenspan is in the U.S.A. — a real big shot. Gretta is his second wife, of course. The first one put him on the map, and once there, he could afford this one. You know how it goes when people become important: you need a trophy partner. And she is, in a curious way.

While he is supposed to be beyond any political bias, she is a very outspokenly pro-Palestine. Earlier in the year, she hoisted a Palestinian flag from the balcony of their luxurious home in Amsterdam, to the great embarrassment of her super-banker husband. He personally removed this symbol, pressured, no doubt, by the numerous Jewish people in Amsterdam, which, at one time, was a major centre of Jewish culture. When Gretta initiated a signature action against the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, she was asked in a radio interview whether she would gather 6,000 signatures, she replied, "Not 6,000 but 6 million." Exactly the number of Jews that died in German gas chambers in the Holocaust.

Later she admitted that this had not been her intention. Neither is it my intention to offend the Jews. Writes Dietrich Bonhoeffer in *Ethics*: "An expulsion of the Jews from the West must necessarily bring with it the expulsion of Christ. For Christ was a Jew."

IN GENERAL EUROPE IS more inclined to favor the Palestinian cause than the Israeli one. Perhaps because during World War II most of Europe was occupied by a foreign power and also saw cruel reprisals when resistance was offered. During our stay I drove past a little village, Putten. I was reminded how, when a high-ranking German officer was killed by the Resistance, the German S.S. rounded up all the males in the town, locked them up in the local church and killed 70 of them. On a lesser scale this tit-for-tat is happening in the Middle East.

Then there is the European-American rivalry. It's almost automatic here that when America says one thing, Europe says another. Also, if the war against Iraq is successful, Europe fears that America will gain even more dominance, with unlimited access to Middle East oil.

THE MIDDLE EAST. After four long years the inspectors have re-entered Iraq under Hans Blix, the UN's chief weapons Inspector. By December 8, Saddam Hussein is supposed to come clean. That is the day he must hand over a list of all the secrets he has: the Weapons of Mass Destruction which supposedly imperil the world.

I have not seen who will do the investigating, but I am quite sure that the majority of them are men. I am a man too. When my wife asks me to look for something, I can never find it. It is not that she hides things: no, I am just stupid in locating things. And, I fear that I am all too typical of men.

So why in the world doesn't the UN send a team of women into Iraq? The most successful spies of all ages are women: Mati Hari comes to mind, that famous Dutch dancer executed by the French for spying for the Germans in World War I. Delilah managed to get Samson's Secret weapon of Mass Destruction out of him with little trouble.

The Bible has other examples as well. Esther is a famous one: that beautiful Jewess prevented the mass destruction of her people then in exile in Babylon, the current Iraq! This event is still commemorated each year in the Jewish Feast of Purim. I remember once writing a play on Esther which included a beauty contest, not staged as the original of course, as those magnificent maidens vying to become the next wife of the Persian King Ahasueres, no doubt, paraded in front of him in the nude. After all, it was written for a high-school performance, and a Christian one at that.

THE MORAL OF ALL THIS is that the UN is missing the boat: all these stupid white men who have been dispatched to Bagdhad will find nothing. Locating the lethal substances that can wipe out entire nations is an impossible task. A kilo of anthrax is enough to infect all Americans. In a country the size of France, it's not hard to hide a jar of white powder somewhere in somebody's attic or basement closet or in the trunk of a car. If I can't find my glasses in a house of modest proportion, while they are plainly visible to my wife, how will these men, even if they have the best detection equipment in the world, detect these deadly ingredients, which, everybody knows, he has.

From 1994 -1998 the inspectors looked at more than 700 sites and found absolutely nothing. For the past four years Iraq has been free of inspections, giving it plenty of time to refine this game of deadly serious hide-and-seek.

SADDAM IS PLAYING FOR time. The only period in which the American troops can fight in relative comfort is during January and February, when the temperature is moderate. Don't forget that these troops must wear protective gear. I am pretty well immune to black flies, having worked outdoors in May for some 25 years. Initially I had a mosquito net around my head, but the heat soon made this impossible, so I braved the bites. No U.S. soldier in Iraq, however, can take such a risk, so they operate fully cloaked in protective plastic, hardly tolerable in even mild conditions.

So Washington must force a crisis. Watch the news media for details. The day after Pearl Harbor Day (Dec. 7) is the first opportunity. Iraq then will solemnly submit The List and will declare that it is full, final, and complete — so help them Allah.

Of course, this statement will be a lie, but it is up to Washington to disprove this to the world, which isn't easy. America has marvelous satellites and super-smart spy planes. They can spot buildings in exact detail, but, so far, even the best technology cannot X-ray these structures. So, we are in for interesting times. Again.

The U.S. and the U.N. play a cat-and-mouse game here. Bush being the cat and Kofi Annan the mouse. Bush wants the arms inspectors to be aggressive. Blix, the head of the U.N. team, disagrees. Time is short. And is in Saddam's favor. Before Christmas the matter of war or not must be settled. This comedy with tragic overtones cannot be replayed next fall, because our economy cannot tolerate the continuing uncertainty, high oil prices and low business investment.

Send in the women for a quick solution.

Bert Hielema will stay put for a while, in Tweed, Ont.

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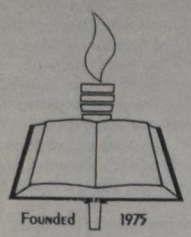

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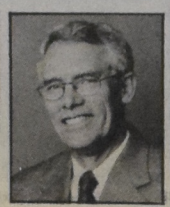

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Personal

I am a 29 year-old Christian female seeking a 29-34 year-old Christian male who has strong Christian values. Reply to: Box 2735, 1 Hiscott St., St. Catharines, ON L2R 1C7

Birthday

90th Birthday
AREND JAGT
will celebrate, the Lord willing, his 90th birthday on December 28, 2002. His wife, Naantke (Haan) and children Jack & Mary, Peter & Shirley, Alice & Ed Hekman, John & Mary, Henk & Mary, Albert (†), Margie & Cor Bos, Arnold & Ann and David along with 21 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren give thanks to God for Dad's long life and the Christian example he has been to us.
Address: 7900 McLaughlin Rd. H302, Brampton, Ont. L6Y 2C7.

Anniversaries

1952 December 7 2002
"Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain"
(Ps. 127:1 a)

WIEGER (BILL) and JOHANNA (JOOP) STELPSTRA
(nee Renkema)
Congratulations on your 50th anniversary from all your children and grandchildren:
David & Nancy Stelpstra - *Guelph, ON*
Joel - *Ottawa, ON*
Cameron - *Guelph, ON*
Ted & Sara Stelpstra - *Sarnia, ON*
Brittney - *Calvin College*
Jordan, Dylan
Robert Stelpstra - *Quebec City, QC*
Nelinda (Lynne) & Ed Vandenberg - *Houston, BC.*
Lauren, Taylor, Maggie & Jonas
An open house will be held in Mom & Dad's honor, D.V., on Sat., Dec. 28, 2002, from 2 - 4 p.m., at Parkview Meadows, 72 Townsend Dr, Townsend, Ont. Best wishes only, please!
Home address: 150 Oak St., Unit 2, Simcoe, ON N3Y 5M5.
Ph: 519-426-1687

Anniversaries

1953 January 1 2003
"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."
Matthew 6:3
With thanksgiving to God, we joyfully announce the 50th Anniversary of our parents:
JOE and ELLY ZANTINGH
(nee Sinkgraven)
We are thankful for the Lord's blessing and guidance in their lives, and pray that the Lord will bless them with many more years together.
Tilda & Don Dam - *Grimsby*
Karen & Will Lammers - *Beamsville*
Henry & Janet Zantingh- *Smithville*
Ron & Kim Zantingh- *Pella, IA*
Tony & Irma Zantingh - *Smithville*
Nancy & Harry DeVries - *Grimsby*
Angela & Rick Attema - *St Anns*
And 33 Grandchildren
You are invited to share our joy at an Open House to be held, the Lord willing, on Saturday, January 4, 2003 from 2-4 p.m. at Smithville Covenant Christian School.
Best wishes only, please.
Home Address: 6140 Sixteen Rd., R.R.#2 Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

1942 December 23 2002
"I will not let you go unless you bless me." Gen.32: 26b
With thanks to God for His great faithfulness and love, we rejoice and celebrate 60 years of marriage with our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents:
WOBBE and PIETJE BYLSMA

We pray that the Lord will continue to bless you both for each other and us,your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.
Congratulations and love:
Theresa & Jim Brand - *Dashwood,ON*
Marsha & Kevin (Karli,Jesse,Levi)
Jamie & Andra (Jordon, Kelsey, Connor ,Logan)
Tracy & Derek (Riley)
Jennifer & Chad (Reece)
Christine & Shawn (Cody)
Auke&Chris Bylsma - *Blyth,ON*
Karen, Sheila &Dan, Adam, Vicki, Jeff
Wibbina & Gerald Toonk - *Exeter, ON*
Angela, Kim, Debra
John&Ruby Bylsma - *Arva, ON*
Mark & Kristin
David & Tammy
Rachel & Jeremy
Beth, Matthew, Rebekah
Anne &Terry Kaastra, - *Clinton,ON*
Mike, Bryan, Allan,
Shaun †(1986-1993), Lisa
Cory & John Kuipers - *Goderich,ON*
Charleen, Pamela, Jody
Pat & Dave Brodie - *Brucefield,ON*
Joel, Amber

OPEN HOUSE: Come share our joy on Saturday December 28,2002 D.V. at the White Carnation, Holmesville, Ont. from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m.
Best wishes only please.
Mailing address :
R.R.#1 Blyth, Ont. N0M1H0

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You are cordially invited to an Open House from 3:00 - 6:00 p.m. on December 21, 2002 to celebrate the occasion of the 50th Wedding Anniversary of

JOHN and SINY PRINZEN
The Open House will be at 'tOldershuus, 2015 Headon Rd., Burlington, Ontario.
Best wishes only please.
Parking is available at the Headon Plaza across the road.

1952 December 19 2002
Look to the Lord and His strength, Seek His face always.
1 Chronicles 16:11
With thanks to God for his great faithfulness and love we rejoice and celebrate 50 years of marriage with our parents and grandparents

HILBERT and HENNY DEROO
(nee Steenbergen)

Mary & Jack Beeksma - *St.George BC*
Laura, Adam
Tilda & Syd Vanderhoek
St.Thomas ON
Alyssa, Terry, Jonathan, Erika (†)
Jim & Reine - *Kitchener, ON*
Brad, Brian, Sarah
Harry & Elaine
Dhahran, Saudi Arabia
Judy & Greg Hager - *Aniak, Alaska*
Deanna, Zac
Ron & Sonja - *Stouffville, ON*
Hanneke, Jacob
Linda, Paula at home.

Open house Saturday, December 28, 2002, 2 - 4 p.m. at the East Christian Reformed Church, Strathroy. Best wishes only.
Home address: 178 Southfield Dr. Strathroy, ON N7G 3V4

Obituaries

July 23, 1906 Nov. 17, 2002
Nieuwe Pekela Brampton
The Netherlands Ontario
The Lord gathered to her people our loving Mother, Grandmother and Great Grandmother

CATHERINE ANN HORLINGS HAGEN
Jean & Louis Tamminga
Grand Rapids, MI
Tim & Sandra - *Naperville, IL*
Mark and Andrea
Ben & Kim - *Grand Rapids, MI*
Nicolette
Karen & Dale Paton - *Blairmore, AB*
Carley, Mollie, and Kestrel
Mark & Joany - *Ancaster, ON*
Ken & Nancy - *State College, PA*
Meredith, Aaron, and Mila
Pat & Mike Claus - *Oshawa, ON*
Kathy & Calvin Dentz - *Brinston, ON*
Joanne & David McLaughlin
Toronto, ON
Michelle & Steve Fluit
Kitchener, ON Megan, Katrina
Elaine & Dan Adema -*Kitchener, ON*
She was preceded in death by her husband Timon. T. Hagen, in 1981; and her grandson David Tamminga in 1983.
A Memorial Service was held on Nov. 20 at Holland Christian Homes, Brampton, ON.
Correspondence address:
M & P. Claus, 657 Balmoral Drive, Oshawa, ON L1J 3A6

Obituaries

In Memory of
LUIT MIEDEMA
On July 1st, Cananda Day, many Friesians gathered at Pinehurst Park in Paris for the Annual Friesian Picnic, and as per usual, everyone was welcomed by the familiar voice of Luit Miedema over the P.A. System. He had done this for the last 35 years and little did we know that it would be his last time for on October 24, 2002 he passed on to glory after suffering a stroke a few days earlier.
We as the Friesian Club of Jarvis were shocked and saddened by the death of our friend and Club President. Luit was the driving force behind our organization and we will sorely miss him. We treasure the twenty years we spent as the Friesian Drama Club. In the twenty plays we performed, Luit participated in every one of them. We look back on the countless hours we spent with him during play rehearsals and trips to towns as far east as Williamsburg, Ont. and west as far as Sarnia Ont. These were twenty funfilled years because when Luit was present there was never a dull moment. His positive way of thinking made us bring the Friesian comedian, Taeke VanderMeer to Canada. If we at times thought some of our plans were a bit risky, it was always Luit who reassured us everything would work out.
The yearly Friesian picnic was no exception. Each year when we went home after the picnic was finished, Luit would always stop at the main park office and make reservations for the next year. Some people have asked if there will be a picnic in 2003. Of course there will be! Luit wouldn't have wanted it any other way.
Will things be the same? The last few weeks I've been reminded of the lyrics of a song on an old 78 RPM record I had in the early 50's. One of the lines went something like "We shall meet, but we will miss him, there will be a vacant chair." So we will go on next year to Paris, but there will be a "vacant chair", a void that no one can fill, because it wouldn't be the same. Besides, we have no choice but to go on, because Luit already reserved the park.
Our thoughts and prayers go out to Luit's wife, Fre, and the kids. We hope that their sorrows will be eased by the assurance that Luit is now in a far better place. At the funeral Pastor Ken Benjamins spoke of the many rooms in our heavenly Father's house. Someday we hope to share one of those rooms with Luit. Do we deserve to go there? No, not really, but it is all made possible because long ago someone died on that cruel cross on Calvary and because of God's "Amazing Grace".

Jarvis Friesian Drama Club.

August 9, 1907 Nov. 30, 2002
Zuidbroek, GR Brampton. ON

ALBERTJE VANDERVEEN-KOBES
was taken to her heavenly home at the age of 95. Predeceased by her husband Cornelis van der Veen[1997], her sons Jacob [2000] & Rinke [1942] & her granddaughter Karen [1970].
Mother, grandmother and great-grandmother of:
Klaas & Nan VanderVeen - *Barrie*
Lani VanderVeen
Andries & Alie VanderVeen - *London*
Betty & John Haagsma
Brent, Samara, Jared, Breanna
Kasey & Liz VanderVeen
Corey, Andrew, Daniel, Natalie
Diane & Ralph Bakker
Leah, Aaron, Janelle, Adriana
Sharon VanderVeen & Jeff Howard
Tristan, Keenan, Noel
Tjitse & Iemkje VanderVeen - *Loretto*
Liz & Brian Schouwstra - Jonathan, Benjamin, Joshua, Jeremy
Audrey & Gary Dykgraaf
Karl & Francie VanderVeen - Maria, James, Justin, Rachel, Sarah
Aaron VanderVeen
Christiaan & Ann VanderVeen - *Brantford*
Monica & Greg Vandertuin - Denver
Marisa VanderVeen & Mendelt Hoekstra - Zion
Christy VanderVeen
Rinske & Hans VanBrederode -*Barrie*
Michael VanBrederode & Susan Allen - Mikayla, Rowan
Richard VanBrederode
Jeltje VanderVeen & Bruce Palmer *Maynooth*
Rinke & Sonya VanderVeen
Rachel, Jason, Tamara, Benjamin, Davita - *St Catharines*
The Lord is my light and my salvation. Ps 27
Correspondence to: Rinske VanBrederode 19 Glenhuron Drive, Barrie, ON L4M 6T4

May 17, 1922 Nov. 30, 2002
Noord Scharwoude Brampton
Holland Ontario
Psalm 121
On Saturday morning, November 30, the Lord took home peacefully, with his family by his side, our much loved husband, father, Opa and great Opa

GERRIT BARTEN
Dear husband of Andrea (nee Vijn) for 55 years. Predeceased by his grandson David Barten (*December 1998*) and two older sisters. He will be greatly missed and will be remembered with love.
His children and families:
Betsy & Dick Braam- *Georgetown ON*
Jason & Retisny - Evan
Sarah & Josh deBoer
Ryan & Hannah
Ann & Tony Bouma - *Calgary, AB*
Peter & Lori, Brian, Diana, Jaclyn, Monique, Mariesa
Klare & Maria Barten - *Guelph, ON*
Michelle & Bill Bronsema
Emma, Olivia
Jeff & Rose
Karen, David (†), Julie
Jacqueline Barten - *Mississauga, ON*
Also survived by one sister and one brother in the Netherlands.
Memorial service was held on Tuesday, December 3, 2002 in Second Christian Reformed Church, Brampton with Rev. Dirk Evans presiding.
Correspondence Address:
14 Staveley Crescent
Brampton, ON L6W 2R9

Zion Christian Reformed Church
"HERITAGE DAYS" invites you to a
HOLLANDSE KERST KIENST
Sun., December 22, 2002, 2:30 p.m.
Zion Christian Reformed Church
409 Adelaide Ave. E. Oshawa
Pastor Carl Tuyl will preach.
Refreshments following.

Advertising

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John 3:16

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Harold De Haan, director with
Laura Pin, piano and Michael Pin, clarinet
Christiaan Teeuwsen, Organ

Friday, **Dec. 27, 2002**
Knox Presbyterian Church
53 Church St. (opposite City Hall)
St. Catharines, ON

Sunday, **December 29, 2002**
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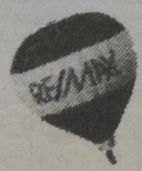

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PASTOR NEEDED
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PASTOR NEEDED
Part-time (about 40%) interim position for Bethel CRC, **Listowel, Ontario** to assist our pastor in providing pastoral care and some preaching. For more information and church profile, or to apply, contact Pastor Jack DeVries or the Clerk, John Hofstee 1-519-291-1013 or e-mail: jhofstee@micro-man.com

BRAMPTON, ONT
John Knox Christian School, Brampton, Ontario, invites applications for a **principal**, beginning **August 1, 2003**. The school has approximently 315 students from JK to grade 8. We are looking for someone with a solid reformed perspective and th ability to relate to Christians from a variety of denominational backgrounds. Check our web site for more information about our school. Please direct application and/or questions to:
Ms. Deb Douma, chairperson
Administrative Search Committee
82 Mclaughlin Road St.
Brampton, ON L6Y 2C7
Tel: 905-874--9713
Fax: 905-451-7604
E-mail: jddouma@rogers.com

LONDON, ON
Faith Community Christian School is an interdenominational Christian School (JK-8) with a student body of approximately 90 students and a dynamic staff.
We are currently seeking applications for the position of **Principal** for the school year starting September 2003.
Qualified applicants should include their statement of faith, curriculum vitae, educational philosophy, transcripts and names of three references.
Please submit applications to:
Faith Community Chr. Sch.
Attn: Tracy Jollymore
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NORTHUMBERLAND CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
is currently seeking a

PRINCIPAL

Northumberland Christian School has been providing Christian Education to the surrounding community for more than 20 years. NCS is located in the beautiful town of **Cobourg** on the shores of Lake Ontario, 1 hour east of Toronto. We currently have 92 students from JK-8 with a staff of 8. We are seeking an administrator to provide guidance to a young and energetic staff, to foster growth within our multidenominational school community, and to lead us into our next phase of Christian Education. NCS is seeking the Lord's guidance as we prepare to relocate.

For further information or to submit a resume please contact:

Annette Otter, Administrator Search Committee
c/o Northumberland Christian School
8861 Danforth Rd., RR#5
COBOURG, ON, K9A 4J8
Tel: (905) 372-8766
email: **annetteotter@nexicom.net** or: **ncss@on.aibn.com**

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Education (Two positions)
Teach introduction, upper-level (elementary and secondary methods), special education.

Environmental Studies
Teach introductory and upper level Environmental Studies courses. Coordinate and direct the program, possibly teach course(s) in Biology, Earth Science, and/or Agriculture.

Programs in Christian Vocation, Project Director
(Possible opening) Direct first-term seminar and coordinate new vocation initiatives

Social Work
Generalist; micro-practice background; methods courses and field practice.

Spanish
Teach elementary, intermediate, and upper level courses in Spanish language, literature, and culture.

Theology
General education courses in biblical theology and upper level biblical studies courses.

Youth Ministry (Possible opening)
Courses in foundations, ministry discernment, youth culture, ecclesiology, practicum

Evaluation of applications will continue until the positions are filled. To learn more about a position and receive application materials, qualified persons committed to a Reformed, biblical perspective and educational philosophy are encouraged to send a letter of interest and curriculum vita/resume to:

Dr. Rockne McCarthy
Vice Pres. - Academic Affairs
Dordt College
498 4th Ave. NE
Sioux Center, IA 51250-1697

Facsimile: 712 722-4496
E-mail: vpaa@dordt.edu
Web site:
www.dordt.edu/offices/acadaff

Dordt College is an equal opportunity institution that strongly encourages the applications of women, minorities, and disabled persons.

Join the excitement in Simcoe County!
In anticipation of our September 2004 opening, the Simcoe County Christian High School Association (member O.A.C.S.) is seeking a

PRINCIPAL/ADMINISTRATOR

to partner with the Board of Directors and its standing committees in laying the foundation for our school.

During the 2003-2004 academic year, the Principal/Administrator will outline policy, develop programs, liase with feeder schools, strengthen visibility in the community, solicit financial support, promote enrolment, and enlist staff.

This is a unique opportunity for an articulate leader to bring creativity, faith and vision to a young organization that has the strong support of its surrounding communities.

Please direct inquiries and/or an application package including a recent statement of Educational Philosophy to:

S.C.C.H.S
c/o 41 Peacock Lane
Barrie, ON L4N 3R7

Ph: 705-727-9242 application deadline: Jan. 25, 2003.

Calendar of Events

Items Appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is $7.50 per line, or $1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion.

Dec. 13	A nationwide invitation from Meadowvale Community CRC, to those in the church with **prophetic giftings**, to listen together to hear what the Spirit is saying to the Christian Reformed Denomination. Friday Dec.13, 7pm, at Redeemer College, **Ancaster**, Ont.
Dec 14	**Pro Musica Choir** of Burlington, Brent Fifield, conductor. Christmas Concert: Hodie Christus Natus Est. 8: p.m. 3132 South Dr. **Burlington**, ON. Bruce Kirkpatrick-Hill - organ. Rudy Neufield - Baritone soloist. $10 Family rate $30. $2 more at the door. Ph. **905-632-1347**
Dec 14	**Christmas Concert - CAMBRIDGE**- Maranatha Christian Reformed Church @ 7:30 p.m. Adults $10, Students $6, Children under 12, FREE. Call 519-623-8151
Dec 17	**Christmas Concert - BOWMANWILLE**- Maranatha CRC @ 8p.m. Call 905-623-7196 for tickets. See ad Dec. 2 issue
Dec 21	**Christmas Concert - WILLOWDALE** Willowdale United Church @ 7:30 p.m. Call the OCMA 416-636-9779. See ad Dec. 2 issue.
Dec 22	**Hollandse Kerst Dienst** Zion CRC Oshawa, ON. 2:30 p.m.Pastor Tuyl preaching. Refreshments. See ad Dec 2 issue.
Dec. 27	Music and Song for the KING - **Ambassadors** Christian Mail Choir - Knox Presbyterian Church, **St. Catharines** 7:30 p.m. See ad Dec. 16 issue
Dec 29	Music and Song for the KING - **Ambassadors** Christian Mail Choir - MacNab St. Presbyterian Church, **Hamilton** 7:30 p.m. For more details, see ad Dec. 16 issue.
Jan 17	**Concert of Sacred Music** by St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir - 7:30 p.m. at First CRC, 181 Charlton Ave, **Hamilton**. Sponsored by World Wide Christian Schools. Freewill offering. (905) 765-5623
Jan 18	**Concert of Sacred Music** by St. Thomas Crescendo Male Choir - 7:30 p.m. at Rehoboth Christian Reformed Church, 130 Scugog St., **Bowmanville**. Freewill offering (519) 637-4357

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Psalm 100:5b

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Osoyoos – CJOR	8:00 am	1490
Penticton - CKOR	8:00 am	800
Port Alberni – CJAV	7:00 pm	1240
Prince George – CIRX	7:00 am	94.3
Princeton – CHOR	8:00 am	1400
Smithers – CFBV	9:15 am	1230
Summerland – CHOR	8:00 am	1450
Vernon – CJIB	9:30 pm	940

ALBERTA

Brooks – CIBQ	8:30 am	1340
Ft. McMurray – CJOK	8:30 am	1230
High River – CHRB	6:30 pm	1140
Edmonton – CJCA	6:00 pm	930
Westlock – CFOK	7:30 am	1370

SASKATCHEWAN

Estevan – CJSL	8:00 am	1280
Weyburn – CFSL	8:00 am	1190

MANITOBA

Altona – CFAM	9:30 am	950
Steinbach – CHSM	9:30 am	1250
Winnipeg – CKJS	9:00 am	810

ONTARIO

Atikokan – CFAK	9:30 am	1240
Chatham – CFCO	6:30 am	630
Fort Frances – CFOB	9:30 am	640
Guelph – CJOY	8:30 am	1460
Hamilton – CHAM	7:30 am	820
Kapuskasing – CKAP	7:00 am	580
London – CKSL	7:00 am	1410
Oshawa – CKDO	8:00 am	1350
Owen Sound – CFOS	7:00 am	560
Pembroke – CHVR	10:00 am	96.7
Sarnia – CHOK	7:30 am	1070
Stratford – CJCS	8:45 am	1240
Windsor – CKLW	7:30 am	800
Wingham – CKNX	10:30 am	920

NEW BRUNSWICK

Saint John – CHSJ	9:00 am	94.1

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Charlottetown – CFCY	7:00 am	630

NOVA SCOTIA

Bridgewater – CKBW	7:30 am	1000
Digby – CKDY	6:00 am	1420
Halifax – CFDR	8:30 am	780
Liverpool – CKBW	7:30 am	94.5
Kentville – CKEN	8:30 am	1490
Middleton – CKAD	8:30 am	1350
New Glasgow – CKEC	7:30 am	1320
Shelburne – CKBW	7:30 am	93.1
Sydney – CJCB	7:00 am	1270
Weymouth – CKDY	8:30 am	103.1
Windsor – CFAB	8:30 am	1450

ALBERTA
Lethbridge – CJIL
Thursday – 9:00 am
Saturday – 2:00 am

ONTARIO – CTS
Saturday – 7:30 pm

Check your local listings for cable outlets airing *Primary Focus*

PACIFIC – BC
2 pm Sunday.

MOUNTAIN –AB
3 pm Sunday

CENTRAL – SK & MB - 4 pm Sun.

EASTERN – ON & PQ – 5 pm Sun.

ATLANTIC – NB, NS, PEI - 6pm Sun

NFLD – 6:30 Sun.

KIDS CORNER RADIO
Drayton Valley AB – CIBW 8:30 am Sunday 92.9 FM
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Zion Christian Reformed Church
"HERITAGE DAYS"
invites you to a
HOLLANDSE KERST KIENST
MET HET THEMA:

Jezus, Onze Levende Verlosser

Sunday, Dec. 22, 2:30 p.m.
Zion Christian Ref. Church
409 Alelaide Ave. E. Oshawa
Pastor Carl Tuyl will preach
Refreshments following.
Please bring some baking!

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No phone calls please *We appreciate your interest but only those candidates selected for an interview will be contacted.*

Miscellaneous

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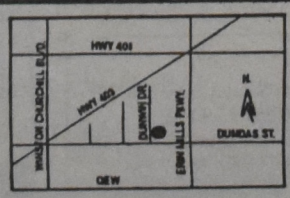

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First CRC,
3902 Heritage Drive,
Taber, AB T1G 1A2

A church profile and further details are available on request. If you have any questions contact us at:
(403) 223-2331, (403) 223-0790 Fax (403) 223-0791, or e-mail Pastor Mike Vandyk, mvandyk@telusplanet.net

Christmas Greetings

Season's Greetings

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and a
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You are my God, and I will give You thanks;
Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good;
His love endures forever... Psalm 118: 28, 29.

Mr. Peter Baarda
Mrs. Hilda van der Wier
Mrs. Liesbeth Colenbrander
Mrs. Aaltje Jongejan
Mrs. Christine Sjaarda
Mrs. Cornelia van Dyk
Mrs. Janke (Jane) Soldaat
Mrs. Anje Dreise
Mrs. Hilda Gerritsen
Mrs. Margaret Zantingh-Ouwehand
Mrs. Pietje (Pat) Wybenga
Mrs. Catrina Slagter
Mrs. Dini Teeuwsen
Mrs. Pauline van der Kruk
Mrs. Jannie Kat
Mrs. Jurienna Hartman
Mrs. Jozina Huinink
Mrs. Meinsje Verwey
Mr. Peter Hamming
Mr. Jacob & Mrs. Renskje de Vries
Mrs. Aleida Buesink
Mr. Ben Hofland
Mr. Gary Schipper

Mrs. Minnie Timmer
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Mrs. Theresa Guther
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Christmas Greetings

Wishing our members and friends God's blessing during this season and throughout the coming year.

From the National Board and staff of the Christian Labour Association of Canada

Offices: Calgary, Chatham, Edmonton, Grimsby, Mississauga, Surrey

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And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth...
John 1:14a

May the reality of the Incarnation be the source of your celebration this Christmas!

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